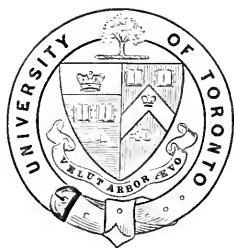


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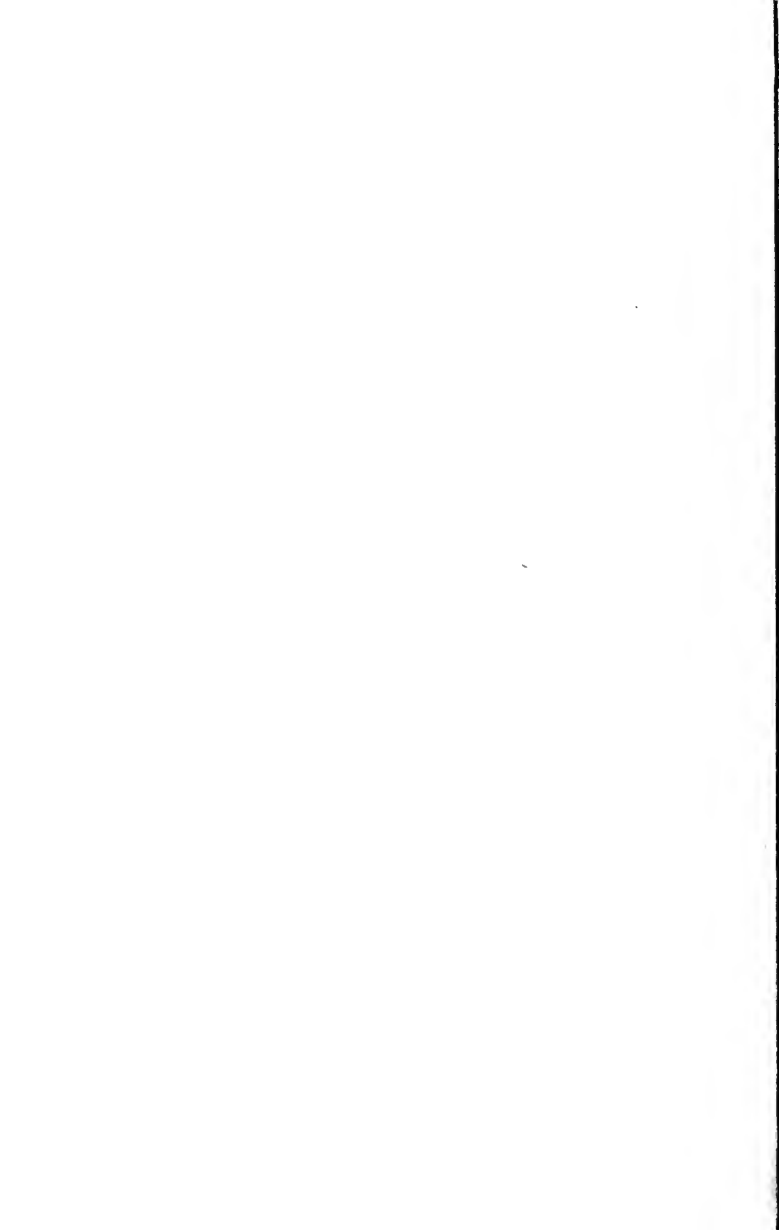


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NOVELS
OF
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON

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THE
LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

BY
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON, BART.

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"Such is Vesuvius! and these things take place in it every year. But all eruptions which have happened since would be trifling, even if all summed into one, compared to what occurred at the period we refer to.

* * * *

"Day was turned into night, and light into darkness;—an inexpressible quantity of dust and ashes was poured out, deluging land, sea, and air, and burying two entire cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii, while the people were sitting in the theatre!"—DION CASSIUS, lib. lxvi.

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII.

CHAPTER IX.

A Storm in the South.—The Witch's Cavern.

It was when the heats of noon died gradually away from the earth, that Glaucus and Ione went forth to enjoy the cooled and grateful air. At that time, various carriages were in use among the Romans; the one most used by the richer citizens, when they required no companion in their excursions, was the *biga*, already described in the early portion of this work; that appropriated to the matrons, was termed *carpentum*,* which had commonly two wheels; the ancients used also a sort of litter, a vast sedan-chair, more commodiously arranged than the modern, inasmuch as the occupant thereof could lie down at ease, instead of being perpendicularly and stiffly jostled up

* For public festivals and games they used one more luxurious and costly, called *pilentum*, with four wheels.

and down.* There was another carriage, used both for travelling and for excursions in the country; it was commodious, containing three or four persons with ease, having a covering which could be raised at pleasure; and, in short, answering very much the purpose of (though very different in shape from) the modern *britska*. It was a vehicle of this description that the lovers, accompanied by one female slave of Ione, now used in their excursion. About ten miles from the city, there was at that day an old ruin, the remains of a temple, evidently Grecian; and as for Glaucus and Ione everything Grecian possessed an interest, they had agreed to visit these ruins: it was thither they were now bound.

Their road lay among vines and olive-groves; till, winding more and more towards the higher ground of Vesuvius, the path grew rugged; the mules moved slowly, and with labour; and at every opening in the wood they beheld those grey and horrent caverns indenting the parched rock, which Strabo has described, but which the various revolutions of time and the volcano have removed from the present aspect of the mountain. The sun, sloping towards his descent, cast long and deep shadows over the mountain; here and there they still heard the rustic reed of the shepherd amongst copses of the beechwood and wild oak. Sometimes they marked the form of the silk-haired and graceful capella, with its wreathing horn and bright grey eye—which, still beneath Ausonian skies,

* But they had also the *sella*, or sedan, in which they sat as we do.

recalls the eclogues of Maro, browsing half-way up the hills ; and the grapes, already purple with the smiles of the deepening summer, glowed out from the arched festoons, which hung pendent from tree to tree. Above them, light clouds floated in the serene heavens, sweeping so slowly athwart the firmament that they scarcely seemed to stir ; while on their right they caught, ever and anon, glimpses of the waveless sea, with some light bark skimming its surface, and the sunlight breaking over the deep in those countless and softest hues so peculiar to that delicious sea.

“How beautiful,” said Glaucus, in a half-whispered tone, “is that expression by which we call Earth our Mother ! With what a kindly equal love she pours her blessings upon her children ! and even to those sterile spots to which Nature has denied beauty, she yet contrives to dispense her smiles : witness the arbutus and the vine, which she wreathes over the arid and burning soil of yon extinct volcano. Ah ! in such an hour and scene as this, well might we imagine that the laughing face of the Faun should peep forth from those green festoons ; or, that we might trace the steps of the Mountain Nymph through the thickest mazes of the glade. But the Nymphs ceased, beautiful Ione, when *thou* wert created !”

There is no tongue that flatters like a lover's ; and yet, in the exaggeration of his feelings, flattery seems to him commonplace. Strange and prodigal exuberance, which soon exhausts itself by overflowing !

They arrived at the ruins : they examined them

with that fondness with which we trace the hallowed and household vestiges of our own ancestry—they lingered there till Hesperus appeared in the rosy heavens; and then returning homeward in the twilight, they were more silent than they had been; for in the shadow and beneath the stars they felt more oppressively their mutual love.

It was at this time that the storm which the Egyptian had predicted began to creep visibly over them. At first, a low and distant thunder gave warning of the approaching conflict of the elements; and then rapidly rushed above the dark ranks of the serried clouds. The suddenness of storms in that climate is something almost preternatural, and might well suggest to early superstition the notion of a divine agency—a few large drops broke heavily among the boughs that half overhung their path, and then, swift and intolerably bright, the forked lightning darted across their very eyes, and was swallowed up by the increasing darkness.

“Swifter, good Carrucarius!” cried Glaucus to the driver; “the tempest comes on apace.”

The slave urged on the mules—they went swift over the uneven and stony road—the clouds thickened, near and more near broke the thunder, and fast rushed the dashing rain.

“Dost thou fear?” whispered Glaucus, as he sought excuse in the storm to come nearer to Ione.

“Not with thee,” said she, softly.

At that instant, the carriage, fragile and ill-contrived (as, despite their graceful shapes, were, for practical

uses, most of such inventions at that time), struck violently into a deep rut, over which lay a log of fallen wood; the driver, with a curse, stimulated his mules yet faster for the obstacle, the wheel was torn from the socket, and the carriage suddenly overset.

Glaucus, quickly extricating himself from the vehicle, hastened to assist Ione, who was fortunately unhurt; with some difficulty they raised the carruca (or earriage), and found that it ceased any longer even to afford them shelter; the springs that fastened the covering were snapped asunder, and the rain poured fast and fiercely into the interior.

In this dilemma, what was to be done? They were yet some distance from the city—no house, no aid, seemed near.

“There is,” said the slave, “a smith about a mile off; I could seek him, and he might fasten at least the wheel to the carruca—but, Jupiter! how the rain beats! my mistress will be wet before I come back.”

“Run thither at least,” said Glaucus; “we must find the best shelter we can till you return.”

The lane was overshadowed with trees, beneath the amplest of which Glaucus drew Ione. He endeavoured, by stripping his own cloak, to shield her yet more from the rapid rain; but it descended with a fury that broke through all puny obstacles: and suddenly, while Glaucus was yet whispering courage to his beautiful charge, the lightning struck one of the trees immediately before them, and split with a mighty crash its huge trunk in twain. This awful incident apprised

them of the danger they braved in their present shelter, and Glaucus looked anxiously round for some less perilous place of refuge. "We are now," said he, "half-way up the ascent of Vesuvius; there ought to be some cavern or hollow in the vine-clad rocks, could we but find it, in which the deserting Nymphs have left a shelter." While thus saying he moved from the trees, and looking wistfully towards the mountain, discovered through the advancing gloom a red and tremulous light at no considerable distance. "That must come," said he, "from the hearth of some shepherd or vine-dresser—it will guide us to some hospitable retreat. Wilt thou stay here, while I—yet no—that would be to leave thee to danger."

"I will go with you cheerfully," said Ione. "Open as the space seems, it is better than the treacherous shelter of these boughs."

Half leading, half carrying Ione, Glaucus, accompanied by the trembling female slave, advanced towards the light, which yet burned red and steadfastly. At length the space was no longer open; wild vines entangled their steps, and hid from them, save by imperfect intervals, the guiding beam. But faster and fiercer came the rain, and the lightning assumed its most deadly and blasting form; they were still, therefore, impelled onward, hoping at last, if the light eluded them, to arrive at some cottage, or some friendly cavern. The vines grew more and more intricate—the light was entirely snatched from them; but a narrow path, which they trod with labour and

pain, guided only by the constant and long-lingering flashes of the storm, continued to lead them towards its direction. The rain ceased suddenly ; precipitous and rough crags of scorched lava frowned before them, rendered more fearful by the lightning that illumined the dark and dangerous soil. Sometimes the blaze lingered over the iron-grey heaps of scoria, covered in part with ancient mosses or stunted trees, as if seeking in vain for some gentler product of earth, more worthy of its ire ; and sometimes, leaving the whole of that part of the scene in darkness, the lightning, broad and sheeted, hung redly over the ocean, tossing far below, until its waves seemed glowing into fire ; and so intense was the blaze, that it brought vividly into view even the sharp outline of the more distant windings of the bay, from the eternal Misenum, with its lofty brow, to the beautiful Sorrentum and the giant hills behind.

Our lovers stopped in perplexity and doubt, when suddenly, as the darkness that gloomed between the fierce flashes of lightning once more wrapped them round, they saw near, but high before them, the mysterious light. Another blaze, in which heaven and earth were reddened, made visible to them the whole expanse ; no house was near, but just where they had beheld the light they thought they saw in the recess of a cavern the outline of a human form ; the darkness once more returned ; the light, no longer paled beneath the fires of heaven, burned forth again : they resolved to ascend towards it ; they had to wind

their way among vast fragments of stone, here and there overhung with wild bushes ; but they gained nearer and nearer to the light, and at length they stood opposite the mouth of a kind of cavern, apparently formed by huge splinters of rock that had fallen transversely athwart each other : and, looking into the gloom, each drew back involuntarily with a superstitious fear and chill.

A fire burned in the far recess of the cave ; and over it was a small caldron ; on a tall and thin column of iron stood a rude lamp ; over that part of the wall, at the base of which burned the fire, hung in many rows, as if to dry, a profusion of herbs and weeds. A fox, couched before the fire, gazed upon the strangers with its bright and red eye—its hair bristling—and a low growl stealing from between its teeth ; in the centre of the cave was an earthen statue, which had three heads of a singular and fantastic cast : they were formed by the real skulls of a dog, a horse, and a boar ; a low tripod stood before this wild representation of the popular Hecate.

But it was not these appendages and appliances of the cave that thrilled the blood of those who gazed fearfully therein—it was the face of its inmate. Before the fire, with the light shining full upon her features, sat a woman of considerable age. Perhaps in no country are there seen so many hags as in Italy—in no country does beauty so awfully change, in age, to hideousness the most appalling and revolting. But the old woman now before them was not one of these

specimens of the extreme of human ugliness ; on the contrary, her countenance betrayed the remains of a regular but high and aquiline order of feature : with stony eyes turned upon them—with a look that met and fascinated theirs—they beheld in that fearful countenance the very image of a corpse !—the same, the glazed, and lustreless regard, the blue and shrunken lips, the drawn and hollow jaw—the dead, lank hair, of a pale grey—the livid, green, ghastly skin, which seemed all surely tinged and tainted by the grave !

“ It is a dead thing !” said Glaucus.

“ Nay—it stirs—it is a ghost or *larva*,” faltered Ione, as she clung to the Athenian’s breast.

“ Oh, away—away !” groaned the slave, “ it is the Witch of Vesuvius !”

“ Who are ye ?” said a hollow and ghostly voice. “ And what do ye here ?”

The sound, terrible and deathlike as it was—suited well the countenance of the speaker, and seeming rather the voice of some bodiless wanderer of the Styx than living mortal—would have made Ione shrink back into the pitiless fury of the storm, but Glaucus, though not without some misgiving, drew her into the cavern.

“ We are storm-beaten wanderers from the neighbouring city,” said he, “ and decoyed hither by yon light ; we crave shelter and the comfort of your hearth.”

As he spoke, the fox rose from the ground and advanced towards the strangers, showing from end to

end its white teeth, and deepening in its menacing growl.

“Down, slave!” said the witch; and at the sound of her voice, the beast dropped at once, covering its face with its brush, and keeping only its quick, vigilant eye fixed upon the invaders of its repose. “Come to the fire, if ye will!” said she, turning to Glaucus and his companions. “I never welcome living thing—save the owl, the fox, the toad, and the viper—so I cannot welcome ye; but come to the fire without welcome—why stand upon form?”

The language in which the hag addressed them was a strange and barbarous Latin, interlarded with many words of some more rude and ancient dialect. She did not stir from her seat, but gazed stonily upon them, as Glaucus now relieved Ione of her outer wrapping garments, and, making her place herself on a log of wood, which was the only other seat he perceived at hand, fanned with his breath the embers into a more glowing flame. The slave, encouraged by the boldness of her superiors, divested herself also of her long *palla*, and crept timorously to the opposite corner of the hearth.

“We disturb you, I fear,” said the silver voice of Ione, in conciliation.

The witch did not reply—she seemed like one who has awakened for a moment from the dead, and has then relapsed once more into the eternal slumber.

“Tell me,” said she suddenly, and after a long pause—“are ye brother and sister?”

“No,” said Ione, blushing.

“Are ye married?”

“Not so,” replied Glaucus.

“Ho, lovers!—ha!—ha!—ha!” and the witch laughed so loud and so long that the caverns rang again.

The heart of Ione stood still at that strange mirth. Glaucus muttered a rapid counterspell to the omen—and the slave turned as pale as the cheek of the witch herself.

“Why dost thou laugh, old crone?” said Glaucus, somewhat sternly, as he concluded his invocation.

“Did I laugh?” said the hag, absently.

“She is in her dotage,” whispered Glaucus: as he said this, he caught the eye of the hag fixed upon him with a malignant and vivid glare.

“Thou liest!” said she, abruptly.

“Thou art an uncourteous welcomer,” returned Glaucus.

“Hush! provoke her not, dear Glaucus!” whispered Ione.

“I will tell thee why I laughed when I discovered ye were lovers,” said the old woman. “It was because it is a pleasure to the old and withered to look upon young hearts like yours—and to know the time will come when you will loathe each other—loathe—loathe—ha!—ha!—ha!”

It was now Ione’s turn to pray against the unpleasant prophecy.

“The gods forbid!” said she. “Yet, poor woman,

thou knowest little of love, or thou wouldst know that it never changes."

"Was I young once, think ye?" returned the hag, quickly; "and am I old, and hideous, and deathly now? Such as is the form, so is the heart." With these words she sank again into a stillness profound and fearful, as if the cessation of life itself.

"Hast thou dwelt here long?" said Glaucus, after a pause, feeling uncomfortably oppressed beneath a silence so appalling.

"Ah, long!—yes."

"It is but a drear abode."

"Ha! thou mayst well say that—Hell is beneath us!" replied the hag, pointing her bony finger to the earth. "And I will tell thee a secret—the dim things below are preparing wrath for ye above—you, the young, and the thoughtless, and the beautiful."

"Thou utterest but evil words, ill becoming the hospitable," said Glaucus; "and in future I will brave the tempest rather than thy welcome."

"Thou wilt do well. None should ever seek me—save the wretched!"

"And why the wretched?" asked the Athenian.

"I am the witch of the mountain," replied the sorceress, with a ghastly grin; "my trade is to give hope to the hopeless; for the crossed in love I have philtres; for the avaricious, promises of treasure; for the malicious, potions of revenge; for the happy and the good, I have only what life has—curses! Trouble me no more."

With this the grim tenant of the cave relapsed into

a silence so obstinate and sullen, that Glaucus in vain endeavoured to draw her into farther conversation. She did not evince, by any alteration of her locked and rigid features, that she even heard him. Fortunately, however, the storm, which was brief as violent, began now to relax; the rain grew less and less fierce; and at last, as the clouds parted, the moon burst forth in the purple opening of heaven, and streamed clear and full into that desolate abode. Never had she shone, perhaps, on a group more worthy of the painter's art. The young, the all-beautiful Ione, seated by that rude fire—her lover, already forgetful of the presence of the hag, at her feet, gazing upward to her face, and whispering sweet words—the pale and affrighted slave at a little distance—and the ghastly hag resting her deadly eyes upon them; yet seemingly serene and fearless (for the companionship of love hath such power) were these beautiful beings, things of another sphere, in that dark and unholy cavern, with its gloomy quaintness of appurtenance. The fox regarded them from his corner with his keen and fiery eye; and as Glaucus now turned towards the witch, he perceived for the first time, just under her seat, the bright gaze and crested head of a large snake; whether it was that the vivid colouring of the Athenian's cloak, thrown over the shoulders of Ione, attracted the reptile's anger—its crest began to glow and rise, as if menacing and preparing itself to spring upon the Neapolitan; Glaucus caught quickly at one of the half-burned logs upon the hearth—and, as if enraged at the

action, the snake came forth from its shelter, and with a loud hiss raised itself on end till its height nearly approached that of the Greek.

"Witch!" cried Glaucus, "command thy creature, or thou wilt see it dead."

"It has been despoiled of its venom!" said the witch, aroused at his threat; but ere the words had left her lip, the snake had sprung upon Glaucus; quick and watchful, the agile Greek leaped lightly aside, and struck so fell and dexterous a blow on the head of the snake, that it fell prostrate and writhing among the embers of the fire.

The hag sprung up, and stood confronting Glaucus with a face which would have befitted the fiercest of the Furies, so utterly dire and wrathful was its expression—yet even in horror and ghastliness preserving the outline and trace of beauty—and utterly free from that coarse grotesque at which the imaginations of the North have sought the source of terror.

"Thou hast," said she, in a slow and steady voice—which belied the expression of her face, so much was it passionless and calm—"thou hast had shelter under my roof, and warmth at my hearth; thou hast returned evil for good; thou has smitten and haply slain the thing that loved me and was mine: nay, more, the creature, above all others, consecrated to gods and deemed venerable by man*—now hear thy

* A peculiar sanctity was attached by the Romans (as, indeed, by perhaps every ancient people) to serpents, which they kept tame in their houses, and often introduced at their meals.

punishment. By the moon, who is the guardian of the sorceress—by Orcus, who is the treasurer of wrath—I curse thee! and thou art cursed! May thy love be blasted—may thy name be blackened—may the infernals mark thee—may thy heart wither and scorch—may thy last hour recall to thee the prophet voice of the Saga of Vesuvius! And thou,” she added, turning sharply towards Ione, and raising her right arm, when Glaucus burst impetuously on her speech:—

“Hag!” cried he, “forbear! Me thou hast cursed, and I commit myself to the gods—I defy and scorn thee! but breathe but one word against yon maiden, and I will convert the oath on thy foul lips to thy dying groan. Beware!”

“I have done,” replied the hag, laughing wildly; “for in thy doom is she who loves thee accursed. And not the less, that I heard *her* breathe thy name, and know by what word to commend thee to the demons. *Glaucus*—thou art doomed!” So saying, the witch turned from the Athenian, and kneeling down beside her wounded favourite, which she dragged from the hearth, she turned to them her face no more.

“O Glaucus!” said Ione, greatly terrified, “what have we done?—Let us hasten from this place; the storm has ceased. Good mistress, forgive him—recall thy words—he meant but to defend himself—accept this peace-offering to unsay the said:” and Ione, stooping, placed her purse on the hag’s lap.

“Away!” said she, bitterly—“away! The oath once woven the Fates only can untie. Away!”

"Come, dearest!" said Glaucus, impatiently. "Thinkest thou that the gods above us or below hear the impotent ravings of dotage? Come!"

Long and loud rang the echoes of the cavern with the dread laugh of the Saga—she deigned no further reply.

The lovers breathed more freely when they gained the open air: yet the scene they had witnessed, the words and the laughter of the witch, still fearfully dwelt with Ione; and even Glaucus could not thoroughly shake off the impression they bequeathed. The storm had subsided—save, now and then, a low thunder muttered at the distance amidst the darker clouds, or a momentary flash of lightning affronted the sovereignty of the moon. With some difficulty they regained the road, where they found the vehicle already sufficiently repaired for their departure, and the carrucarius calling loudly upon Hercules to tell him where his charge had vanished.

Glaucus vainly endeavoured to cheer the exhausted spirits of Ione; and scarce less vainly to recover the elastic tone of his own natural gaiety. They soon arrived before the gate of the city: as it opened to them, a litter borne by slaves impeded the way.

"It is too late for egress," cried the sentinel to the inmate of the litter.

"Not so," said a voice, which the lovers started to hear; it was a voice they well recognised. "I am bound to the villa of Marcus Polybius. I shall return shortly. I am Arbaces the Egyptian."

The scruples of him of the gate were removed, and the litter passed close beside the carriage that bore the lovers.

“Arbaces, at this hour!—scarce recovered too, methinks!—Whither and for what can he leave the city?” said Glaucus.

“Alas!” replied Ione, bursting into tears, “my soul feels still more and more the omen of evil. Preserve us, O ye gods! or at least,” she murmured inly, “preserve my Glaucus!”

CHAPTER X.

The Lord of the Burning Belt and his Minion. Fate writes her
Prophecy in red letters, but who shall read them?

ARBACES had tarried only till the cessation of the tempest allowed him, under cover of night, to seek the Saga of Vesuvius. Borne by those of his trustier slaves in whom in all more secret expeditions he was accustomed to confide, he lay extended along his litter, and resigning his sanguine heart to the contemplation of vengeance gratified and love possessed. The slaves in so short a journey moved very little slower than the ordinary pace of mules; and Arbaces soon arrived at the commencement of a narrow path, which the lovers had not been fortunate enough to discover; but which, skirting the thick vines, led at once to the habitation of the witch. Here he rested the litter; and bidding his slaves conceal themselves and the vehicle among the vines from the observation of any chance passenger, he mounted alone, with steps still feeble, but supported by a long staff, the drear and sharp ascent.

Not a drop of rain fell from the tranquil heaven: but the moisture dripped mournfully from the laden

boughs of the vine, and now and then collected in tiny pools in the crevices and hollows of the rocky way.

"Strange passions these for a philosopher," thought Arbaces, "that lead one like me just new from the bed of death, and lapped even in health amidst the roses of luxury, across such nocturnal paths as this; but Passion and Vengeance treading to their goal can make an Elysium of a Tartarus." High, clear, and melancholy shone the moon above the road of that dark wayfarer, glassing herself in every pool that lay before him, and sleeping in shadow along the sloping mount. He saw before him the same light that had guided the steps of his intended victims, but, no longer contrasted by the blackened clouds, it shone less redly clear.

He paused, as at length he approached the mouth of the cavern, to recover breath; and then, with his wonted collected and stately mien, he crossed the unhallowed threshold.

The fox sprang up at the ingress of this new-comer, and by a long howl announced another visitor to his mistress.

The witch had resumed her seat, and her aspect of gravelike and grim repose. By her feet, upon a bed of dry weeds which half covered it, lay the wounded snake; but the quick eye of the Egyptian caught its scales glittering in the reflected light of the opposite fire, as it writhed,—now contracting, now lengthening, its folds, in pain and unsated anger.

"Down, slave!" said the witch, as before, to the

fox ; and, as before, the animal dropped to the ground—mute, but vigilant.

“Rise, servant of Nox and Erebus !” said Arbaces, commandingly ; “a superior in thine art salutes thee ! rise and welcome him.”

At these words the hag turned her gaze upon the Egyptian’s towering form and dark features. She looked long and fixedly upon him, as he stood before her in his Oriental robe, and folded arms, and steadfast and haughty brow. “Who art thou,” she said at last, “that callest thyself greater in art than the Saga of the Burning Fields, and the daughter of the perished Etrurian race ?”

“I am he,” answered Arbaces, “from whom all cultivators of magic, from north to south, from east to west, from the Ganges and the Nile to the vales of Thessaly and the shores of the yellow Tiber, have stooped to learn.”

“There is but one such man in these places,” answered the witch, “whom the men of the outer world, unknowing his loftier attributes and more secret fame, call Arbaces the Egyptian : to us of a higher nature and deeper knowledge, his rightful appellation is Hermes of the Burning Girdle.”

“Look again,” returned Arbaces : “I am he.”

As he spoke he drew aside his robe, and revealed a cincture seemingly of fire, that burned around his waist, clasped in the centre by a plate whereon was engraved some sign apparently vague and unintelligible, but which was evidently not unknown to the Saga.

She rose hastily, and threw herself at the feet of Arbaces. "I have seen, then," said she, in a voice of deep humility, "the Lord of the Mighty Girdle—vouchsafe my homage."

"Rise," said the Egyptian; "I have need of thee."

So saying, he placed himself on the same log of wood on which Ione had rested before, and motioned to the witch to resume her seat.

"Thou sayest," said he, as she obeyed, "that thou art a daughter of the ancient Etrurian* tribes—the mighty walls of whose rock-built cities yet frown above the robber race that hath seized upon their ancient reign. Partly came those tribes from Greece, partly were they exiles from a more burning and primeval soil. In either case art thou of Egyptian lineage, for the Grecian masters of the aboriginal helot were among the restless sons whom the Nile banished from her bosom. Equally, then, O Saga! thy descent is from ancestors that swore allegiance to mine own. By birth as by knowledge, art thou the subject of Arbaces. Hear me, then, and obey!"

The witch bowed her head.

"Whatever art we possess in sorcery," continued Arbaces, "we are sometimes driven to natural means

* The Etrurians (it may be superfluous to mention) were celebrated for their enchantments. Arbaces is wrong in assuming their Egyptian origin, but the Egyptians arrogated the ancestry of almost every one of the more illustrious races, and there are not wanting modern schoolmen who, too credulously, support the claim.

to attain our object. The ring* and the crystal,† and the ashes‡ and the herbs,§ do not give unerring divinations; neither do the higher mysteries of the moon yield even the possessor of the girdle a dispensation from the necessity of employing ever and anon human measures for a human object. Mark me, then: thou art deeply skilled, methinks, in the secrets of the more deadly herbs; thou knowest those which arrest life, which burn and scorch the soul from out her citadel, or freeze the channels of young blood into that ice which no sun can melt. Do I overrate thy skill? Speak, and truly!"

"Mighty Hermes, such lore is, indeed, mine own! Deign to look at these ghostly and corpse-like features; they have waned from the hues of life merely by watching over the rank herbs which simmer night and day in yon caldron."

The Egyptian moved his seat from so unblessed or so unhealthful a vicinity as the witch spoke.

"It is well," said he; "thou hast learned that maxim of all the deeper knowledge which saith, 'Despise the body to make wise the mind.' But to thy task. There cometh to thee by to-morrow's starlight a vain maiden, seeking of thine art a love-charm to fascinate from another the eyes that should utter but soft tales to her own; instead of thy philtres, give the maiden one of thy most powerful poisons. Let the lover breathe his vows to the Shades."

* Δακτυλομαντεία.

† Κρυστολομαντεία.

‡ Τεφρομαντεία.

§ Βοτανομαντεία.

The witch trembled from head to foot.

"Oh, pardon! pardon! dread master," said she, falteringly: "but this I dare not. The law in these cities is sharp and vigilant; they will seize—they will slay me."

"For what purpose, then, thy herbs and thy potions, vain Saga?" said Arbaces, sneeringly.

The witch hid her loathsome face with her hands.

"Oh! years ago," said she, in a voice unlike her usual tones, so plaintive was it, and so soft, "I was not the thing that I am now—I loved, I fancied myself beloved."

"And what connection hath thy love, witch, with my commands?" said Arbaces, impetuously.

"Patience," resumed the witch—"patience, I implore. I loved! Another and less fair than I—yes, by Nemesis! less fair—allured from me my chosen. I was of that dark Etrurian tribe to whom most of all were known the secrets of the gloomier magic. My mother was herself a saga: she shared the resentment of her child; from her hands I received the potion that was to restore me his love; and from her, also, the poison that was to destroy my rival. Oh, crush me, dread walls! my trembling hands mistook the phials: my lover fell indeed at my feet; but dead! dead! Since then, what has been life to me? I became suddenly old; I devoted myself to the sorceries of my race; still by an irresistible impulse I curse myself with an awful penance; still I seek the most noxious herbs; still I concoct the poisons; still I imagine that I am to give them to my hated rival; still I pour them into the phial; still I

fancy that they shall blast her beauty to the dust ; still I wake and see the quivering body, the foaming lips, the glazing eyes of my Aulus—murdered, and by me !”

The skeleton frame of the witch shook beneath strong convulsions.

Arbaces gazed upon her with a curious though contemptuous eye.

“ And this foul thing has yet human emotions !” thought he ; “ she still cowers over the ashes of the same fire that consumes Arbaces !—Such are we all ! Mystic is the tie of those mortal passions that unite the greatest and the least.”

He did not reply till she had somewhat recovered herself, and now sat rocking to and fro in her seat, with glassy eyes, fixed on the opposite flame, and large tears rolling down her livid cheeks.

“ A grievous tale is thine, in truth,” said Arbaces. “ But these emotions are fit only for our youth—age should harden our hearts to all things but ourselves ; as every year adds a scale to the shell-fish, so should each year wall and incrust the heart. Think of those frenzies no more ! And now, listen to me again ! By the revenge that was dear to thee, I command thee to obey me ! it is for vengeance that I seek thee ! This youth whom I would sweep from my path has crossed me, despite my spells :—this thing of purple and broidery, of smiles and glances, soulless and mindless, with no charm but that of beauty—accursed be it !—this insect—this Glaucus—I tell thee, by Orcus and by Nemesis, he must die.”

And working himself up at every word, the Egyptian, forgetful of his debility—of his strange companion—of everything but his own vindictive rage, strode, with large and rapid steps, the gloomy cavern.

“Glaucus ! saidst thou, mighty master ?” said the witch, abruptly ; and her dim eye glared at the name with all that fierce resentment at the memory of small affronts so common amongst the solitary and the shunned.

“Ay, so he is called ; but what matters the name ? Let it not be heard as that of a living man three days from this date !”

“Hear me !” said the witch, breaking from a short reverie into which she was plunged after this last sentence of the Egyptian. “Hear me ! I am thy thing and thy slave ! spare me ! If I give to the maiden thou speakest of that which would destroy the life of Glaucus, I shall surely be detected—the dead ever find avengers. Nay, dread man ! if thy visit to me be tracked, if thy hatred to Glaucus be known, thou mayst have need of thy archest magic to protect thyself !”

“Ha !” said Arbaces, stopping suddenly short ; and as a proof of that blindness with which passion darkens the eyes even of the most acute, this was the first time when the risk that he himself ran by this method of vengeance had occurred to a mind ordinarily wary and circumspect.

“But,” continued the witch, “if instead of that which shall arrest the heart, I give that which shall sear and blast the brain—which shall make him who

quaffs it unfit for the uses and career of life—an abject, raving, benighted thing—smiting sense to drivelling, youth to dotage—will not thy vengeance be equally sated—thy object equally attained?”

“Oh, witch! no longer the servant, but the sister—the equal of Arbaces—how much brighter is woman’s wit, even in vengeance, than ours! how much more exquisite than death is such a doom!”

“And,” continued the hag, gloating over her fell scheme, “in this is but little danger: for by ten thousand methods, which men forbear to seek, can our victim become mad. He may have been among the vines and seen a nymph*—or the vine itself may have had the same effect—ha, ha! they never inquire too scrupulously into these matters in which the gods may be agents. And let the worst arrive—let it be known that it is a love-charm—why, madness is a common effect of philtres; and even the fair she that gave it finds indulgence in the excuse. Mighty Hermes, have I ministered to thee cunningly?”

“Thou shalt have twenty years’ longer date for this,” returned Arbaces. “I will write anew the epoch of thy fate on the face of the pale stars—thou shalt not serve in vain the Master of the Flaming Belt. And here, Saga, carve thee out, by these golden tools, a warmer cell in this dreary cavern—one service to me shall countervail a thousand divinations by sieve and shears to the gaping rustics.” So saying, he cast upon

* To see a nymph was to become mad, according to classic and popular superstition.

the floor a heavy purse, which clinked not unmusically to the ear of the hag, who loved the consciousness of possessing the means to purchase comforts she disdained. "Farewell," said Arbaces, "fail not—out-watch the stars in concocting thy beverage—thou shalt lord it over thy sisters at the Walnut-tree,* when thou tellest them that thy patron and thy friend is Hermes the Egyptian. To-morrow night we meet again."

He stayed not to hear the valediction or the thanks of the witch: with a quick step he passed into the moonlit air, and hastened down the mountain.

The witch, who followed his steps to the threshold, stood long at the entrance of the cavern, gazing fixedly on his receding form; and as the sad moonlight streamed upon her shadowy form and deathlike face, emerging from the dismal rocks, it seemed as if one gifted, indeed, by supernatural magic had escaped from the dreary Orcus; and, the foremost of its ghostly throng, stood at its black portals—vainly summoning his return, or vainly sighing to rejoin him. The hag then slowly re-entering the cave, groaningly picked up the heavy purse, took the lamp from its stand, and, passing to the remotest depth of her cell, a black and abrupt passage, which was not visible, save at a near approach, closed round as it was with jutting and sharp crags, yawned before her; she went several yards along

* The celebrated and immemorial rendezvous of the witches at Benevento. The winged serpent attached to it, long an object of idolatry in those parts, was probably consecrated by Egyptian superstitions.

this gloomy path, which sloped gradually downwards, as if towards the bowels of the earth, and, lifting a stone, deposited her treasure in a hole beneath, which, as the lamp pierced its secrets, seemed already to contain coins of various value, wrung from the credulity or gratitude of her visitors.

"I love to look at you," said she, apostrophising the moneys; "for when I see you I feel that I am indeed of power. And I am to have twenty years' longer life to increase your store! O thou great Hermes!"

She replaced the stone, and continued her path onwards for some paces, when she stopped before a deep irregular fissure in the earth. Here, as she bent, strange, rumbling, hoarse, and distant sounds might be heard, while ever and anon, with a loud and grating noise which, to use a homely but faithful simile, seemed to resemble the grinding of steel upon wheels, volumes of streaming and dark smoke issued forth, and rushed spirally along the cavern.

"The Shades are noisier than their wont," said the hag, shaking her grey locks; and, looking into the cavity, she beheld, far down, glimpses of a long streak of light, intensely but darkly red. "Strange," she said, shrinking back; "it is only within the last two days that dull deep light hath been visible—what can it portend?"

The fox, who had attended the steps of his fell mistress, uttered a dismal howl, and ran cowering back to the inner cave; a cold shuddering seized the hag herself at the cry of the animal, which, causeless as it seemed,

the superstitions of the time considered deeply ominous. She muttered her placatory charm, and tottered back into her cavern, where, amidst her herbs and incantations, she prepared to execute the orders of the Egyptian.

“He called me dotard,” said she, as the smoke curled from the hissing caldron: “when the jaws drop, and the grinders fall, and the heart scarce beats, it is a pitiable thing to dote; but when,” she added, with a savage and exulting grin, “the young, and the beautiful, and the strong, are suddenly smitten into idiocy—ah, *that* is terrible! Burn flame—simmer herb—swelter toad—I cursed him, and he shall be cursed!”

On that night, and at the same hour which witnessed the dark and unholy interview between Arbaces and the Saga, Apæcides was baptised.

CHAPTER XI.

Progress of Events.—The Plot Thickens.—The Web is Woven, but the Net changes hands.

“AND you have the courage, then, Julia, to seek the Witch of Vesuvius this evening; in company, too, with that fearful man?”

“Why, Nydia,” replied Julia, timidly, “dost thou really think there is anything to dread? These old hags, with their enchanted mirrors, their trembling sieves, and their moon-gathered herbs, are, I imagine, but crafty impostors, who have learned, perhaps, nothing but the very charm for which I apply to their skill, and which is drawn but from the knowledge of the field’s herbs and simples. Wherefore should I dread?”

“Dost thou not fear thy companion?”

“What, Arbaces? By Dian, I never saw lover more courteous than that same magician! And were he not so dark, he would be even handsome.”

Blind as she was, Nydia had the penetration to perceive that Julia’s mind was not one that the gallantries of Arbaces were likely to terrify. She therefore dissuaded her no more; but nursed in her excited heart

the wild and increasing desire to know if sorcery had indeed a spell to fascinate love to love.

"Let me go with thee, noble Julia," said she at length; "my presence is no protection, but I should like to be beside thee to the last."

"Thine offer pleases me much," replied the daughter of Diomed. "Yet how canst thou contrive it? we may not return until late; they will miss thee."

"Ione is indulgent," replied Nydia. "If thou wilt permit me to sleep beneath thy roof, I will say that thou, an early patroness and friend, hast invited me to pass the day with thee, and sing thee my Thessalian songs; her courtesy will readily grant to thee so light a boon."

"Nay, ask for thyself!" said the haughty Julia. "*I stoop to request no favour from the Neapolitan!*"

"Well, be it so. I will take my leave now; make my request, which I know will be readily granted, and return shortly."

"Do so; and thy bed shall be prepared in my own chamber."

With that, Nydia left the fair Pompeian.

On her way back to Ione she was met by the chariot of Glaucus, on whose fiery and curveting steeds was riveted the gaze of the crowded street.

He kindly stopped for a moment to speak to the flower-girl.

"Blooming as thine own roses, my gentle Nydia! and how is thy fair mistress!—recovered, I trust, from the effects of the storm?"

"I have not seen her this morning," answered Nydia, "but——"

"But what? draw back—the horses are too near thee."

"But think you Ione will permit me to pass the day with Julia, the daughter of Diomed?—She wishes it, and was kind to me when I had few friends."

"The gods bless thy grateful heart! I will answer for Ione's permission."

"Then I may stay over the night, and return to-morrow?" said Nydia, shrinking from the praise she so little merited.

"As thou and fair Julia please. Commend me to her; and, hark ye, Nydia, when thou hearest her speak, note the contrast of her voice with that of the silver-toned Ione.—*Vale!*"

His spirits entirely recovered from the effect of the past night, his locks waving in the wind, his joyous and elastic heart bounding with every spring of his Parthian steeds, a very prototype of his country's god, full of youth and of love—Glaucus was borne rapidly to his mistress.

Enjoy while ye may the present—who can read the future?

As the evening darkened, Julia, reclined within her litter, which was capacious enough also to admit her blind companion, took her way to the rural baths indicated by Arbaces. To her natural levity of disposition, her enterprise brought less of terror than of pleasurable excitement; above all, she glowed at the

thought of her coming triumph over the hated Neapolitan.

A small but gay group was collected round the door of the villa, as her litter passed by it to the private entrance of the baths appropriated to the women.

"Methinks, by this dim light," said one of the bystanders, "I recognise the slaves of Diomed."

"True, Clodius," said Sallust: "it is probably the litter of his daughter Julia. She is rich, my friend; why dost thou not proffer thy suit to her?"

"Why, I had once hoped that Glaucus would have married her. She does not disguise her attachment; and then, as he gambles freely and with ill success——"

"The sesterces would have passed to thee, wise Clodius. A wife is a good thing—when it belongs to another man!"

"But," continued Clodius, "as Glaucus is, I understand, to wed the Neapolitan, I think I must even try my chance with the dejected maid. After all, the lamp of Hymen will be gilt, and the vessel will reconcile one to the odour of the flame. I shall only protest, my Sallust, against Diomed's making *thee* trustee to his daughter's fortune."*

"Ha! ha! let us within, my *comissator*; the wine and the garlands wait us."

* It was an ancient Roman law, that no one should make a woman his heir. This law was evaded by the parent's assigning his fortune to a friend in trust for his daughter, but the trustee might keep it if he liked. The law had, however, fallen into disuse before the date of this story.

Dismissing her slaves to that part of the house set apart for their entertainment, Julia entered the baths with Nydia, and, declining the offers of the attendants, passed by a private door into the garden behind.

"She comes by appointment, be sure," said one of the slaves.

"What is that to thee?" said a superintendent, sourly; "she pays for the baths, and does not waste the saffron. Such appointments are the best part of the trade. Hark! do you not hear the widow Fulvia clapping her hands? Run, fool—run!"

Julia and Nydia, avoiding the more public part of the garden, arrived at the place specified by the Egyptian. In a small circular plot of grass the stars gleamed upon the statue of Silenus:—the merry god reclined upon a fragment of rock—the lynx of Bacchus at his feet—and over his mouth he held, with extended arm, a bunch of grapes, which he seemingly laughed to welcome ere he devoured.

"I see not the magician," said Julia, looking round; when, as she spoke, the Egyptian slowly emerged from the neighbouring foliage, and the light fell palely over his sweeping robes.

"*Salve*, sweet maiden!—But ha! whom hast thou here? we must have no companions!"

"It is but the blind flower-girl, wise magician," replied Julia: "herself a Thessalian."

"Oh! Nydia!" said the Egyptian; "I know her well."

Nydia drew back and shuddered.

"Thou hast been at my house, methinks!" said he, approaching his voice to Nydia's ear; "thou knowest the oath!—Silence and secrecy, now as then, or beware!"

"Yet," he added, musingly to himself, "why confide more than is necessary, even in the blind?—Julia, canst thou trust thyself alone with me? Believe me, the magician is less formidable than he seems."

As he spoke, he gently drew Julia aside.

"The witch loves not many visitors at once," said he; "leave Nydia here till your return; she can be of no assistance to us: and, for protection—your own beauty suffices—your own beauty and your own rank; yes, Julia, I know thy name and birth. Come, trust thyself with me, fair rival of the youngest of the Naiads!"

The vain Julia was not, as we have seen, easily affrighted; she was moved by the flattery of Arbaces, and she readily consented to suffer Nydia to await her return; nor did Nydia press her presence. At the sound of the Egyptian's voice all her terror of him returned: she felt a sentiment of pleasure at learning she was not to travel in his companionship.

She returned to the bath-house, and in one of the private chambers waited their return. Many and bitter were the thoughts of this wild girl as she sat there in her eternal darkness. She thought of her own desolate fate, far from her native land, far from the bland cares that once assuaged the April sorrows of childhood;—deprived of the light of day, with none but strangers to guide her steps, accursed by the one soft

feeling of her heart, loving and without hope, save the dim and unholy ray which shot across her mind, as her Thessalian fancies questioned of the force of spells and the gifts of magic !

Nature had sown in the heart of this poor girl the seeds of virtue never destined to ripen. The lessons of adversity are not always salutary—sometimes they soften and amend, but as often they indurate and pervert. If we consider ourselves more harshly treated by fate than those around us, and do not acknowledge in our own deeds the justice of the severity, we become too apt to deem the world our enemy, to ease ourselves in defiance to wrestle against our *softer self*, and to indulge the darker passions which are so easily fermented by the sense of injustice. Sold early into slavery, sentenced to a sordid taskmaster, exchanging her situation, only yet more to embitter her lot—the kindlier feelings, naturally profuse in the breast of Nydia, were nipped and blighted. Her sense of right and wrong was confused by a passion to which she had so madly surrendered herself; and the same intense and tragic emotions which we read of in the women of the classic age—a Myrrha, a Medea—and which hurried and swept away the whole soul when once delivered to love—ruled, and rioted in, her breast.

Time passed : a light step entered the chamber where Nydia yet indulged her gloomy meditations.

“ Oh, thanked be the immortal gods ! ” said Julia, “ I have returned, I have left that terrible cavern ! Come, Nydia ! let us away forthwith ! ”

It was not till they were seated in the litter that Julia again spoke.

"Oh!" said she, tremblingly, "such a scene! such fearful incantations! and the dead face of the hag!—But, let us talk not of it. I have obtained the potion—she pledges its effect. My rival shall be suddenly indifferent to his eye, and I, I alone, the idol of Glaucus!"

"Glaucus!" exclaimed Nydia.

"Ay! I told thee, girl, at first, that it was *not* the Athenian whom I loved: but I see now that I may trust thee wholly—it *is* the beautiful Greek!"

What, then, were Nydia's emotions! She had connived, she had assisted, in tearing Glaucus from Ione; but only to transfer, by all the power of magic, his affections yet more hopelessly to another. Her heart swelled almost to suffocation—she gasped for breath—in the darkness of the vehicle, Julia did not perceive the agitation of her companion; she went on rapidly dilating on the promised effect of her acquisition, and on her approaching triumph over Ione, every now and then abruptly digressing to the horror of the scene she had quitted—the unmoved mien of Arbaces, and his authority over the dreadful saga.

Meanwhile Nydia recovered her self-possession: a thought flashed across her: she slept in the chamber of Julia—she might possess herself of the potion.

They arrived at the house of Diomed, and descended to Julia's apartment, where the night's repast awaited them.

"Drink, Nydia, thou must be cold; the air was chill to-night; as for me, my veins are yet ice."

And Julia unhesitatingly quaffed deep draughts of the spiced wine.

"Thou hast the potion," said Nydia; "let me hold it in my hands. How small the phial is! of what colour is the draught?"

"Clear as crystal," replied Julia, as she retook the philtre; "thou couldst not tell it from this water. The witch assures me it is tasteless. Small though the phial, it suffices for a life's fidelity: it is to be poured into any liquid; and Glaucus will only know what he has quaffed by the effect."

"Exactly like this water in appearance?"

"Yes, sparkling and colourless as this. How bright it seems! it is as the very essence of moonlit dews. Bright thing! how thou shinest on my hopes through thy crystal vase!"

"And how is it sealed?"

"But by one little stopper—I withdraw it now—the draught gives no odour. Strange, that that which speaks to neither sense should thus command all!"

"Is the effect instantaneous?"

"Usually;—but sometimes it remains dormant for a few hours."

"Oh, how sweet is this perfume!" said Nydia, suddenly, as she took up a small bottle on the table, and bent over its fragrant contents.

"Thinkest thou so? The bottle is set with gems

of some value. Thou wouldst not have the bracelet yesternorn. Wilt thou take the bottle?"

"It ought to be such perfumes as these that should remind one who cannot see of the generous Julia. If the bottle be not too costly——"

"Oh! I have a thousand costlier ones: take it, child!"

Nydia bowed her gratitude, and placed the bottle in her vest.

"And the draught would be equally efficacious whoever administers it?"

"If the most hideous hag beneath the sun bestowed it, such is its asserted virtue that Glaucus would deem her beautiful, and none but her!"

Julia, warmed by wine, and the reaction of her spirits, was now all animation and delight; she laughed loud, and talked on a hundred matters—nor was it till the night had advanced far towards morning that she summoned her slaves and undressed.

When they were dismissed, she said to Nydia—

"I will not suffer this holy draught to quit my presence till the hour comes for its uses. Lie under my pillow, bright spirit, and give me happy dreams!"

So saying, she placed the potion under her pillow. Nydia's heart beat violently.

"Why dost thou drink that unmixed water, Nydia? Take the wine by its side."

"I am fevered," replied the blind girl, "and the water cools me. I will place this bottle by my bedside; it refreshes in these summer nights, when the

dews of sleep fall not on our lips. Fair Julia, I must leave thee very early—so Ione bids—perhaps before thou art awake ; accept, therefore, now my congratulations.”

“Thanks : when next we meet, you may find Glaucus at my feet.”

They had retired to their couches, and Julia, worn out by the excitement of the day, soon slept. But anxious and burning thoughts rolled over the mind of the wakeful Thessalian. She listened to the calm breathing of Julia ; and her ear, accustomed to the finest distinctions of sound, speedily assured her of the deep slumber of her companion.

“Now befriend me, Venus !” said she, softly.

She rose gently, and poured the perfume from the gift of Julia upon the marble floor—she rinsed it several times carefully with the water that was beside her, and then, easily finding the bed of Julia (for night to her was as day), she pressed her trembling hand under the pillow and seized the potion. Julia stirred not ; her breath regularly fanned the burning cheek of the blind girl. Nydia, then, opening the phial, poured its contents into the bottle, which easily contained them ; and then, refilling the former reservoir of the potion with that limpid water which Julia had assured her it so resembled, she once more placed the phial in its former place. She then stole again to her couch, and waited—with what thoughts !—the dawning day.

The sun had risen—Julia slept still—Nydia noiselessly dressed herself, placed her treasure carefully in

her vest, took up her staff, and hastened to quit the house.

The porter, Medon, saluted her kindly as she descended the steps that led to the street: she heard him not; her mind was confused and lost in the whirl of tumultuous thoughts, each thought a passion. She felt the pure morning air upon her cheek, but it cooled not her scorching veins.

“Glaucus,” she murmured, “all the love-charms of the wildest magic could not make thee love me as I love thee. Ione!—ah, away hesitation! away remorse! Glaucus, my fate is in thy smile; and thine! O hope! O joy! O transport!—*thy* fate is in these hands!”



BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

Reflections on the Zeal of the Early Christians. Two men come to a Perilous Resolve. Walls have ears—particularly sacred walls.

WHOEVER regards the early history of Christianity, will perceive how necessary to its triumph was that fierce spirit of zeal, which, fearing no danger, accepting no compromise, inspired its champions and sustained its martyrs. In a dominant church the genius of intolerance *betrays* its cause;—in a weak and a persecuted church, the same genius mainly *supports*. It was necessary to scorn, to loathe, to abhor the creeds of other men, in order to conquer the temptations which they presented—it was necessary rigidly to believe not only that the Gospel was the true faith, but the *sole* true faith that saved, in order to nerve the disciple to the austerity of its doctrine, and to encouraging him to the sacred and perilous chivalry of converting the Polytheist and the Heathen. The sectarian sternness

which confined virtue and heaven to a chosen few, which saw demons in other gods, and the penalties of hell in another religion—made the believer naturally anxious to convert all to whom he felt the ties of human affection; and the circle thus traced by benevolence to man was yet more widened by a desire for the glory of God. It was for the honour of the Christian faith that the Christian boldly forced his tenets upon the scepticism of some, the repugnance of others, the sage contempt of the philosopher, the pious shudder of the people; his very intolerance supplied him with his fittest instruments of success; and the soft Heathen began at last to imagine there must indeed be something holy in a zeal wholly foreign in his experience, which stopped at no obstacle, dreaded no danger, and even at the torture, or on the scaffold, referred a dispute far other than the calm differences of speculative philosophy to the tribunal of an Eternal Judge. It was thus that the same fervour which made the Churchman of the middle age a bigot without mercy, made the Christian of the early days a hero without fear.

Of these more fiery, daring, and earnest natures, not the least ardent was Olinthus. No sooner had Apæcides been received by the rites of baptism into the bosom of the Church, than the Nazarene hastened to make him conscious of the impossibility to retain the office and robes of priesthood. He could not, it was evident, profess to worship God, and continue even outwardly to honour the idolatrous altars of the Fiend.

Nor was this all ; the sanguine and impetuous mind of Olinthus beheld in the power of Apæcides the means of divulging to the deluded people the juggling mysteries of the oracular Isis. He thought Heaven had sent this instrument of his design in order to disabuse the eyes of the crowd, and prepare the way, perchance, for the conversion of a whole city. He did not hesitate then to appeal to all the new-kindled enthusiasm of Apæcides, to arouse his courage, and to stimulate his zeal. They met according to previous agreement, the evening after the baptism of Apæcides, in the grove of Cybele, which we have before described.

“At the next solemn consultation of the oracle,” said Olinthus, as he proceeded in the warmth of his address, “advance yourself to the railing, proclaim aloud to the people the deception they endure, invite them to enter, to be themselves the witness of the gross but artful mechanism of imposture thou hast described to me. Fear not—the Lord, who protected Daniel, shall protect thee ; *we*, the community of Christians, will be amongst the crowd ; *we* will urge on the shrinking : and in the first flush of the popular indignation and shame, I myself, upon those very altars, will plant the palm-branch typical of the Gospel—and to my tongue shall descend the rushing Spirit of the living God.”

Heated and excited as he was, this suggestion was not displeasing to Apæcides. He was rejoiced at so early an opportunity of distinguishing his faith in his new sect, and to his holier feelings were added those of

a vindictive loathing at the imposition he had himself suffered, and a desire to avenge it. In that sanguine and elastic *overbound* of obstacles (the rashness necessary to all who undertake venturous and lofty actions), neither Olinthus nor the proselyte perceived the impediments to the success of their scheme, which might be found in the reverent superstition of the people themselves, who would probably be loath, before the sacred altars of the great Egyptian goddess, to believe even the testimony of her priest against her power.

Apæcides then assented to this proposal with a readiness which delighted Olinthus. They parted with the understanding that Olinthus should confer with the more important of his Christian brethren on his great enterprise, should receive their advice and the assurances of their support on the eventful day. It so chanced that one of the festivals of Isis was to be held on the second day after this conference. The festival proffered a ready occasion for the design. They appointed to meet once more on the next evening at the same spot : and in that meeting were finally to be settled the order and details of the disclosure for the following day.

It happened that the latter part of this conference had been held near the sacellum, or small chapel, which I have described in the early part of this work ; and so soon as the forms of the Christian and the priest had disappeared from the grove, a dark and ungainly figure emerged from behind the chapel.

“I have tracked you with some effect, my brother

flamen," soliloquised the eavesdropper; "you, the priest of Isis, have not for mere idle discussion conferred with this gloomy Christian. Alas! that I could not hear all your precious plot: enough! I find, at least, that you meditate revealing the sacred mysteries, and that to-morrow you meet again at this place to plan the how and the when. May Osiris sharpen my ears then, to detect the whole of your unheard-of audacity! When I have learned more, I must confer at once with Arbaces. We will frustrate you, my friends, deep as you think yourselves. At present my breast is a locked treasury of your secret."

Thus muttering, Calenus, for it was he, wrapped his robe round him, and strode thoughtfully homeward.

CHAPTER II.

A Classic Host, Cook, and Kitchen—Apæcides seeks Ione—
Their Conversation.

IT was then the day for Diomed's banquet to the most select of his friends. The graceful Glaucus, the beautiful Ione, the official Pansa, the high-born Clodius, the immortal Fulvius, the exquisite Lepidus, the epicurean Sallust, were not the only honourers of his festival. He expected, also, an invalid senator from Rome (a man of considerable repute and favour at court), and a great warrior from Herculaneum, who had fought with Titus against the Jews, and having enriched himself prodigiously in the wars, was always told by his friends that his country was eternally indebted to his disinterested exertions! The party, however, extended to a yet greater number: for although, critically speaking, it was at one time thought inelegant among the Romans to entertain less than three or more than nine at their banquets, yet this rule was easily disregarded by the ostentations. And we are told, indeed, in history, that one of the most splendid of these entertainers usually feasted a select party of three hundred. Diomed, however, more

modest, contented himself with doubling the number of the Muses. His party consisted of eighteen, no unfashionable number in the present day.

It was the morning of Diomed's banquet ; and Diomed himself, though he greatly affected the gentleman and the scholar, retained enough of his mercantile experience to know that a master's eye makes a ready servant. Accordingly, with his tunic ungirdled on his portly stomach, his easy slippers on his feet, a small wand in his hand, wherewith he now directed the gaze, and now corrected the back, of some duller menial, he went from chamber to chamber of his costly villa.

He did not disdain even a visit to that sacred apartment in which the priests of the festival prepare their offerings. On entering the kitchen, his ears were agreeably stunned by the noise of dishes and pans, of oaths and commands. Small as this indispensable chamber seems to have been in all the houses of Pompeii, it was, nevertheless, usually fitted up with all that amazing variety of stoves and shapes, stewpans and saucepans, cutters and moulds, without which a cook of spirit, no matter whether he be an ancient or a modern, declares it utterly impossible that he can give you anything to eat. And as fuel was then, as now, dear and scarce in those regions, great seems to have been the dexterity exercised in preparing as many things as possible with as little fire. An admirable contrivance of this nature may still be seen in the

Neapolitan Museum—viz., a portable kitchen, about the size of a folio volume, containing stoves for four dishes, and an apparatus for heating water or other beverages.

Across the small kitchen flitted many forms which the quick eye of the master did not recognise.

“Oh! oh!” grumbled he to himself, “that cursed Congrio hath invited a whole legion of cooks to assist him. They won’t serve for nothing, and this is another item in the total of my day’s expenses. By Bacchus! thrice lucky shall I be if the slaves do not help themselves to some of the drinking vessels: ready, alas, are their hands, capacious are their tunics. *Me miserum!*”

The cooks, however, worked on, seemingly heedless of the apparition of Diomed.

“Ho, Euclio, your egg-pan! What! is this the largest? it only holds thirty-three eggs: in the houses *I* usually serve, the smallest egg-pan holds fifty, if need be!”

“The unconseionable rogue!” thought Diomed; “he talks of eggs as if they were a sesterce a hundred!”

“By Mercury!” cried a pert little culinary disciple, scarce in his novitiate; “who ever saw such antique sweetmeat shapes as these?—it is impossible to do credit to one’s art with such rude materials. Why, Sallust’s commonest sweetmeat-shape represents the whole siege of Troy; Hector and Paris, and Helen——with little Astyanax and the Wooden Horse into the bargain!”

"Silence, fool!" said Congrio, the cook of the house, who seemed to leave the chief part of the battle to his allies. "My master, Diomed, is not one of those expensive good-for-noughts, who must have the last fashion, cost what it will!"

"Thou liest, base slave!" cried Diomed, in a great passion—"and thou costest me already enough to have ruined Lucullus himself! Come out of thy den, I want to talk to thee."

The slave, with a sly wink at his confederates, obeyed the command.

"Man of three letters,"* said Diomed, with his face of solemn anger, "how didst thou dare to invite all those rascals into my house?—I see thief written in every line of their faces."

"Yet, I assure you, master, that they are men of most respectable character—the best cooks of the place; it is a great favour to get them. But for *my* sake——"

"Thy sake, unhappy Congrio!" interrupted Diomed; "and by what purloined moneys of mine, by what reserved filchings from marketing, by what goodly meats converted into grease, and sold in the suburbs, by what false charges for bronzes marred, and earthenware broken—hast thou been enabled to make them serve thee for *thy* sake?"

"Nay, master, do not impeach my honesty! May the gods desert me if——"

* The common witty objurgation, from the trilateral word "fur" (thief).

"Swear not!" again interrupted the choleric Diomed, "for then the gods will smite thee for a perjurer, and I shall lose my cook on the eve of dinner. But, enough of this at present: keep a sharp eye on thy ill-favoured assistants, and tell me no tales to-morrow of vases broken, and cups miraculously vanished, or thy whole back shall be one pain. And hark thee! thou knowest thou hast made me pay for those Phrygian *attagens** enough, by Hercules, to have feasted a sober man for a year together—see that they be not one iota over-roasted. The last time, O Congrio, that I gave a banquet to my friends, when thy vanity did so boldly undertake the becoming appearance of a Melian crane, thou knowest it came up like a stone from Ætna—as if all the fires of Phlegethon had been scorching out its juices. Be modest this time, Congrio—wary and modest. Modesty is the nurse of great actions; and in all other things, as in this, if thou wilt not spare thy master's purse, at least consult thy master's glory."

"There shall not be such a cœna seen at Pompeii since the days of Hercules."

"Softly, softly—thy cursed boasting again! But I say, Congrio, yon *homununculus*—yon pigmy assailant of my cranes—yon pert-tongued neophyte of the kitchen—was there aught but insolence on his tongue when he maligned the comeliness of my sweetmeat-

* The attagen of Phrygia or Ionia (the bird thus *anglicised* in the plural) was held in peculiar esteem by the Romans. "*Attagen carnis suavissimæ.*"—*Athen.*, lib. ix. cap. 8, 9. It was a little bigger than a partridge.

shapes? I would not be out of the fashion, Congrio."

"It is but the custom of us cooks," replied Congrio, gravely, "to undervalue our tools, in order to increase the effect of our art. The sweetmeat-shape is a fair shape, and a lovely; but I would recommend my master, at the first occasion, to purchase some new ones of a——"

"That will suffice," exclaimed Diomed, who seemed resolved never to allow his slave to finish his sentences. "Now, resume thy charge—shine—eclipse thyself. Let men envy Diomed his cook—let the slaves of Pompeii style thee Congrio the great! Go! yet stay—thou hast not spent all the moneys I gave thee for the marketing?"

"*All!*"—alas! the nightingales' tongues and the Roman *tomacula*,* and the oysters from Britain, and sundry other things, too numerous now to recite, are yet left unpaid for. But what matter? every one trusts the *Archmagirus*† of Diomed the wealthy!"

"Oh, unconscionable prodigal!—what waste!—what profusion!—I am ruined! But go, hasten—inspect!—taste!—perform!—surpass thyself! Let the Roman senator not despise the poor Pompeian. Away, slave!—and remember, the Phrygian attagens."

The chief disappeared within his natural domain, and Diomed rolled back his portly presence to the more

* "*Candiduli divina tomacula uorci.*"—*Juvenal*, x. l. 355. A rich and delicate species of sausage.

† *Archmagirus* was the lofty title of the chief cook.

courtly chambers. All was to his liking — the flowers were fresh, the fountains played briskly, the mosaic pavements were as smooth as mirrors.

“Where is my daughter Julia?” he asked.

“At the bath.”

“Ah ! that reminds me !—time wanes !—and I must bathe also.”

Our story returns to Apæcides. On awaking that day from the broken and feverish sleep which had followed his adoption of a faith so strikingly and sternly at variance with that in which his youth had been nurtured, the young priest could scarcely imagine that he was not yet in a dream ; he had crossed the fatal river —the past was henceforth to have no sympathy with the future ; the two worlds were distinct and separate, —that which had been from that which was to be. To what a bold and adventurous enterprise he had pledged his life !—to unveil the mysteries in which he had participated — to desecrate the altars he had served — to denounce the goddess whose ministering robe he wore ! Slowly he became sensible of the hatred and the horror he should provoke amongst the pious, even if successful ; if frustrated in his daring attempt, what penalties might he not incur for an offence hitherto unheard of —for which no specific law, derived from experience, was prepared ; and which for that very reason, precedents, dragged from the sharpest armoury of obsolete and inapplicable legislation, would probably be distorted to meet ! His friends,—the sister of his youth,—could he expect justice, though he might receive compassion,

from them? This brave and heroic act would by their heathen eyes be regarded, perhaps, as a heinous apostasy—at the best, as a pitiable madness.

He dared, he renounced, everything in this world, in the hope of securing that eternity in the next, which had so suddenly been revealed to him. While these thoughts on the one hand invaded his breast, on the other hand his pride, his courage, and his virtue, mingled with reminiscences of revenge for deceit, of indignant disgust at fraud, conspired to raise and to support him.

The conflict was sharp and keen ; but his new feelings triumphed over his old : and a mighty argument in favour of wrestling with the sanctities of old opinions and hereditary forms might be found in the conquest over both, achieved by that humble priest. Had the early Christians been more controlled by “the solemn plausibilities of custom”—less of democrats in the pure and lofty acceptance of that perverted word,—Christianity would have perished in its cradle !

As each priest in succession slept several nights together in the chambers of the temple, the term imposed on Apæcides was not yet completed ; and when he had risen from his couch, attired himself, as usual, in his robes, and left his narrow chamber, he found himself before the altars of the temple.

In the exhaustion of his late emotions he had slept far into the morning, and the vertical sun already poured its fervid beams over the sacred place.

“*Salve, Apæcides !*” said a voice, whose natural

asperity was smoothed by long artifice into an almost displeasing softness of tone. "Thou art late abroad ; has the goddess revealed herself to thee in visions ?"

"Could she reveal her true self to the people, Calenus, how incenseless would be these altars !"

"That," replied Calenus, "may possibly be true ; but the deity is wise enough to hold commune with none but priests."

"A time may come when she will be unveiled without her own acquiescence."

"It is not likely : she has triumphed for countless ages. And that which has so long stood the test of time rarely succumbs to the lust of novelty. But, hark ye, young brother ! these sayings are indiscreet."

"It is not for thee to silence them," replied Apæcides, haughtily.

"So hot !—yet I will not quarrel with thee. Why, my Apæcides, has not the Egyptian convinced thee of the necessity of our dwelling together in unity ? Has he not convinced thee of the wisdom of deluding the people, and enjoying ourselves ? If not, oh, brother ! he is not that great magician he is esteemed."

"Thou, then, hast shared his lessons ?" said Apæcides, with a hollow smile.

"Ay ! but I stood less in need of them than thou. Nature had already gifted me with the love of pleasure, and the desire of gain and power. Long is the way that leads the voluptuary to the severities of life ; but it is only one step from pleasant sin to sheltering

hypocrisy. Beware the vengeance of the goddess, if the shortness of that step be disclosed."

"Beware, thou, the hour when the tomb shall be rent, and the rottenness exposed," returned Apæcides, solemnly. "*Vale!*"

With these words he left the flamen to his meditations. When he got a few paces from the temple, he turned to look back. Calenus had already disappeared in the entry room of the priests, for it now approached the hour of that repast which, called *prandium* by the ancients, answers in point of date to the breakfast of the moderns. The white and graceful fane gleamed brightly in the sun. Upon the altars before it rose the incense and bloomed the garlands. The priest gazed long and wistfully upon the scene—it was the last time that it was ever beheld by him!

He then turned and pursued his way slowly towards the house of Ione; for before, possibly, the last tie that united them was cut in twain—before the uncertain peril of the next day was incurred, he was anxious to see his last surviving relative, his fondest, as his earliest friend.

He arrived at her house, and found her in the garden with Nydia.

"This is kind, Apæcides," said Ione, joyfully; "and how eagerly have I wished to see thee!—what thanks do I not owe thee? How churlish hast thou been to answer none of my letters—to abstain from coming hither to receive the expressions of my gratitude! Oh, thou hast assisted to preserve thy sister from dis-

honour! What, what can she say to thank thee, now thou art come at last?"

"My sweet Ione, thou owest me no gratitude, for thy cause was mine. Let us avoid that subject, let us recur not to that impious man—how hateful to both of us! I may have a speedy opportunity to teach the world the nature of his pretended wisdom and hypocritical severity. But let us sit down, my sister; I am wearied with the heat of the sun; let us sit in yonder shade, and, for a little while longer, be to each other what we have been."

Beneath a wide plane-tree, with the cistus and the arbutus clustering round them, the living fountain before, the greensward beneath their feet; the gay cicada, once so dear to Athens, rising merrily ever and anon amidst the grass; the butterfly, beautiful emblem of the soul, dedicated to Psyche, and which has continued to furnish illustrations to the Christian bard, rich in the glowing colours caught from Sicilian skies,* hovering about the sunny flowers, itself like a winged flower—in this spot, and this scene, the brother and the sister sat together for the last time on earth. You may tread now on the same place; but the garden is no more, the columns are shattered, the fountain has ceased to play. Let the traveller search amongst the ruins of Pompeii for the house of Ione. Its remains are yet visible; but I will not betray them to the gaze of commonplace tourists. He who is more sensitive

* In Sicily are found, perhaps, the most beautiful varieties of the butterfly.

than the herd will discover them easily : when he has done so, let him keep the secret.

They sat down, and Nydia, glad to be alone, retired to the farther end of the garden.

"Ione, my sister," said the young convert, "place your hand upon my brow ; let me feel your cool touch. Speak to me, too, for your gentle voice is like a breeze that hath freshness as well as music. Speak to me, but *forbear to bless me !* Utter not one word of those forms of speech which our childhood was taught to consider sacred !"

"Alas ! and what then shall I say ? Our language of affection is so woven with that of worship, that the words grow chilled and trite if I banish from them allusion to our gods."

"*Our gods !*" murmured Apæcides, with a shudder : "thou slightest my request already."

"Shall I speak then to thee only of Isis ?"

"The Evil Spirit ! No, rather be dumb for ever, unless at least thou canst—but away, away this talk ! Not now will we dispute and cavil ; not now will we judge harshly of each other. Thou, regarding me as an apostate ! and I all sorrow and shame for thee as an idolater. No, my sister, let us avoid such topics and such thoughts. In thy sweet presence a calm falls over my spirit. For a little while I forget. As I thus lay my temples on thy bosom, as I thus feel thy gentle arm embrace me, I think that we are children once more, and that the heaven smiles equally upon both. For oh ! if hereafter I escape, no matter what peril ;

and it be permitted me to address thee on one sacred and awful subject ; should I find thine ear closed and thy heart hardened, what hope for myself could countervail the despair for thee ? In thee, my sister, I behold a likeness made beautiful, made noble, of myself. Shall the mirror live for ever, and the form itself be broken as the potter's clay ? Ah, no—no—thou wilt listen to me yet ! Dost thou remember how we went into the fields by Baiæ, hand in hand together, to pluck the flowers of spring ? Even so, hand in hand, shall we enter the Eternal Garden, and crown ourselves with imperishable asphodel ! ”

Wondering and bewildered by words she could not comprehend, but excited even to tears by the plain-tiveness of their tone, Ione listened to those out-pourings of a full and oppressed heart. In truth, Apæcides himself was softened much beyond his ordinary mood, which to outward seeming was usually either sullen or impetuous. For the noblest desires are of a jealous nature—they engross, they absorb the soul, and often leave the splenetic humours stagnant and unheeded at the surface. Unheeding the petty things around us, we are deemed morose : impatient at earthly interruption to the diviner dreams, we are thought irritable and churlish. For as there is no chimera vainer than the hope that one human heart shall find sympathy in another, so none ever interpret us with justice ; and none, no, not our nearest and our dearest ties, forbear with us in mercy ! When we are dead and repentance comes too late, both friend and

foe may wonder to think how little there was in us to forgive!

"I will talk to thee then of our early years," said Ione. "Shall yon blind girl sing to thee of the days of childhood? Her voice is sweet and musical, and she hath a song on that theme which contains none of those allusions it pains thee to hear."

"Dost thou remember the words, my sister?" asked Apæcides.

"Methinks yes: for the tune, which is simple, fixed them on my memory."

"Sing to me then thyself. My ear is not in unison with unfamiliar voices; and thine, Ione, full of household associations, has ever been to me more sweet than all the hireling melodies of Lycia or of Crete. Sing to me!"

Ione beckoned to a slave that stood in the portico, and sending for her lute, sang, when it arrived, to a tender and simple air, the following verses:—

A REGRET FOR CHILDHOOD.

I.

"It is not that our earlier Heaven
Escapes its April showers,
Or that to childhood's heart is given
No snake amidst the flowers.
Ah! twined with grief
Each brightest leaf,
That's wreathed us by the Hours!
Young though we be, the Past may sting,
The Present feed its sorrow;
But hope shines bright on everything
That waits us with the morrow.
Like sunlit glades,
The dimmest shades
Some rosy beam can borrow.

II.

It is not that our later years
Of cares are woven wholly,
But smiles less swiftly chase the tears,
And wounds are healed more slowly.
And Memory's vow
To lost ones now,
Makes joys too bright, unholy.
And ever fled the Iris bow
That smiled when clouds were o'er us.
If storms should burst, uncheered we go,
A drearier waste before us ;—
And with the toys
Of childish joys,
We've broke the staff that bore us !”

Wisely and delicately had Ione chosen that song, sad though its burthen seemed ; for when we are deeply mournful, discordant above all others is the voice of mirth : the fittest spell is that borrowed from melancholy itself, for dark thoughts can be softened down when they cannot be brightened ; and so they lose the precise and rigid outline of their truth, and their colours melt into the ideal. As the leech applies in remedy to the internal sore some outward irritation, which, by a gentler wound, draws away the venom of that which is more deadly, thus, in the rankling festers of the mind, our art is to divert to a milder sadness on the surface the pain that gnaweth at the core. And so with Apæciës, yielding to the influence of the silver voice that reminded him of the past, and told but of half the sorrow borne to the present, he forgot his more immediate and fiery sources of anxious thought. He spent hours in making Ione alternately sing to, and converse with,

him ; and when he rose to leave her, it was with a calmed and lulled mind.

"Ione," said he, as he pressed her hand, "should you hear my name blackened and maligned, will you credit the aspersion?"

"Never, my brother, never!"

"Dost thou not imagine, according to thy belief, that the evil-doer is punished hereafter, and the good rewarded?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"Dost thou think, then, that he who is truly good should sacrifice every selfish interest in his zeal for virtue?"

"He who doth so is the equal of the gods."

"And thou believest that, according to the purity and courage with which he thus acts, shall be his portion of bliss beyond the grave?"

"So we are taught to hope."

"Kiss me, my sister. One question more.—Thou art to be wedded to Glaucus : perchance that marriage may separate us more hopelessly—but not of this speak I now ;—thou art to be married to Glaucus—dost thou love him? Nay, my sister, answer me by words."

"Yes!" murmured Ione, blushing.

"Dost thou feel that, for his sake, thou couldst renounce pride, brave dishonour, and incur death? I have heard that when women really love, it is to that excess."

"My brother, all this could I do for Glaucus, and feel that it were not a sacrifice. There is no sacrifice

to those who love, in what is borne for the one we love."

"Enough! shall woman feel thus for man, and man feel less devotion to his God?"

He spoke no more. His whole countenance seemed instinct and inspired with a divine life: his chest swelled proudly; his eyes glowed: on his forehead was writ the majesty of a man who can dare be noble! He turned to meet the eyes of Ione—earnest, wistful, fearful;—he kissed her fondly, strained her warmly to his breast, and in a moment more he had left the house.

Long did Ione remain in the same place, mute and thoughtful. The maidens again and again came to warn her of the deepening noon, and her engagement to Diomed's banquet. At length she woke from her reverie, and prepared, not with the pride of beauty, but listless and melancholy, for the festival: one thought alone reconciled her to the promised visit—she should meet Glaucus—she could confide to him her alarm and uneasiness for her brother.

CHAPTER III.

A Fashionable Party and a Dinner à la mode in Pompeii.

MEANWHILE Sallust and Glaucus were slowly strolling towards the house of Diomed. Despite the habits of his life, Sallust was not devoid of many estimable qualities. He would have been an active friend, a useful citizen—in short, an excellent man, if he had not taken it into his head to be a philosopher. Brought up in the schools in which Roman plagiarism worshipped the echo of Grecian wisdom, he had imbued himself with those doctrines by which the later Epicureans corrupted the simple maxims of their great master. He gave himself altogether up to pleasure, and imagined there was no sage like a boon companion. Still, however, he had a considerable degree of learning, wit, and good-nature; and the hearty frankness of his very vices seemed like virtue itself beside the utter corruption of Clodius and the prostrate effeminacy of Lepidus; and therefore Glaucus liked him the best of his companions; and he, in turn, appreciating the nobler qualities of the Athenian, loved him almost as much as a cold muræna, or a bowl of the best Falernian.

"This is a vulgar old fellow, this Diomed," said Sallust ; "but he has some good qualities—in his cellar !"

"And some charming ones—in his daughter."

"True, Glaucus : but you are not much moved by them, methinks. I fancy Clodius is desirous to be your successor."

"He is welcome.—At the banquet of Julia's beauty, no guest, be sure, is considered a *musca*."*

"You are severe : but she has, indeed, something of the Corinthian about her—they will be well matched, after all ! What good-natured fellows we are to associate with that gambling good-for-nought !"

"Pleasure unites strange varieties," answered Glaucus. "He amuses me——"

"And flatters ;—but then he pays himself well ! He powders his praise with gold-dust."

"You often hint that he plays unfairly—think you so really ?"

"My dear Glaucus, a Roman noble has his dignity to keep up—dignity is very expensive—Clodius must cheat like a scoundrel, in order to live like a gentleman."

"Ha, ha !—well, of late I have renounced the dice. Ah, Sallust ! when I am wedded to Ione, I trust I may yet redeem a youth of follies. We are both born for better things than those in which we sympathise now—born to render our worship in nobler temples than the sty of Epicurus."

"Alas !" returned Sallust, in rather a melancholy

* Unwelcome and uninvited guests were called *muscæ*, or flies.

tone, "what do we know more than this,—life is short—beyond the grave all is dark? There is no wisdom like that which says 'enjoy.'"

"By Bacchus! I doubt sometimes if we *do* enjoy the utmost of which life is capable."

"I am a moderate man," returned Sallust, "and do not ask 'the utmost.' We are like malefactors, and intoxicate ourselves with wine and myrrh, as we stand on the brink of death; but, if we did not do so, the abyss would look very disagreeable. I own that I was inclined to be gloomy until I took so heartily to drinking—that is a new life, my Glaucus."

"Yes! but it brings us next morning to a new death."

"Why, the next morning is unpleasant, I own; but then, if it were not so, one would never be inclined to read. I study betimes—because, by the gods! I am generally unfit for anything else till noon."

"Fie, Scythian!"

"Pshaw! the fate of Pentheus to him who denies Bacchus."

"Well, Sallust, with all your faults, you are the best profligate I ever met; and verily, if I were in danger of life, you are the only man in all Italy who would stretch out a finger to save me."

"Perhaps *I* should not, if it were in the middle of supper. But, in truth, we Italians are fearfully selfish."

"So are all men who are not free," said Glaucus, with a sigh. "Freedom alone makes men sacrifice to each other."

“Freedom, then, must be a very fatiguing thing to an Epicurean,” answered Sallust. “But here we are at our host’s.”

As Diomed’s villa is one of the most considerable in point of size of any yet discovered at Pompeii, and is, moreover, built much according to the specific instructions for a suburban villa laid down by the Roman architect, it may not be uninteresting briefly to describe the plan of the apartments through which our visitors passed.

They entered, then, by the same small vestibule at which we have before been presented to the aged Medon, and passed at once into a colonnade, technically termed the peristyle ; for the main difference between the suburban villa and the town mansion consisted in placing, in the first, the said colonnade in exactly the same place as that which in the town mansion was occupied by the atrium. In the centre of the peristyle was an open court, which contained the impluvium.

From this peristyle descended a staircase to the offices ; another narrow passage on the opposite side communicated with a garden ; various small apartments surrounded the colonnade, appropriated probably to country visitors. Another door to the left on entering communicated with a small triangular portico, which belonged to the baths ; and behind was the wardrobe, in which were kept the vests of the holiday suits of the slaves, and, perhaps, of the master. Seventeen centuries afterwards were found those relics of ancient

finery calcined and crumbling ; kept longer, alas ! than their thrifty lord foresaw.

Return we to the peristyle, and endeavour now to present to the reader a *coup-d'œil* of the whole suit of apartments, which immediately stretched before the steps of the visitors.

Let him then first imagine the columns of the portico, hung with festoons of flowers ; the columns themselves in the lower part painted red, and the walls around glowing with various frescoes ; then, looking beyond a curtain, three parts drawn aside, the eye caught the tablinum or saloon (which was closed at will by glazed doors, now slid back into the walls). On either side of this tablinum were small rooms, one of which was a kind of cabinet of gems ; and these apartments, as well as the tablinum, communicated with a long gallery, which opened at either end upon terraces ; and between the terraces, and communicating with the central part of the gallery, was a hall in which the banquet was that day prepared. All these apartments, though almost on a level with the street, were one storey above the garden ; and the terraces communicating with the gallery were continued into corridors, raised above the pillars, which, to the right and left, skirted the garden below.

Beneath, and on a level with the garden, ran the apartments we have already described as chiefly appropriated to Julia.

In the gallery, then, just mentioned, Diomed received his guests.

The merchant affected greatly the man of letters, and, therefore, he also affected a passion for everything Greek ; he paid particular attention to Glaucus.

"You will see, my friend," said he, with a wave of his hand, "that I am a little classical here—a little Cæcilian—eh? The hall in which we shall sup is borrowed from the Greeks. It is an Æcus Cyzicene. Noble Sallust, they have not, I am told, this sort of apartment in Rome."

"Oh!" replied Sallust, with a half-smile, "you Pompeians combine all that is most eligible in Greece and in Rome ; may you, Diomed, combine the viands as well as the architecture."

"You shall see—you shall see, my Sallust," replied the merchant. "We have a taste at Pompeii, and we have also money."

"They are two excellent things," replied Sallust. "But, behold, the lady Julia!"

The main difference, as I have before remarked, in the manner of life observed among the Athenians and Romans, was, that with the first, the modest women rarely or never took part in entertainments ; with the latter, they were the common ornaments of the banquet ; but when they were present at the feast, it usually terminated at an early hour.

Magnificently robed in white, interwoven with pearls and threads of gold, the handsome Julia entered the apartment.

Scarcely had she received the salutation of the two guests, ere Pansa and his wife, Lepidus, Clodius, and

the Roman senator, entered almost simultaneously ; then came the widow Fulvia ; then the poet Fulvius, like to the widow in name if in nothing else ; the warrior from Herculaneum, accompanied by his umbra, next stalked in ; afterwards, the less eminent of the guests. Ione yet tarried.

It was the mode among the courteous ancients to flatter whenever it was in their power : accordingly, it was a sign of ill-breeding to seat themselves immediately on entering the house of their host. After performing the salutation, which was usually accomplished by the same cordial shake of the right hand which we ourselves retain, and sometimes, by the yet more familiar embrace, they spent several minutes in surveying the apartment, and admiring the bronzes, the pictures, or the furniture, with which it was adorned—a mode very impolite according to our refined English notions, which place good-breeding in indifference. We would not for the world express much admiration of another man's house, for fear it should be thought we had never seen anything so fine before !

“A beautiful statue this of Bacchus !” said the Roman senator.

“A mere trifle !” replied Diomed.

“What charming paintings !” said Fulvia.

“Mere trifles !” answered the owner.

“Exquisite candelabra !” cried the warrior.

“Exquisite !” echoed his umbra.

“Trifles ! trifles !” reiterated the merchant.

Meanwhile, Glaucus found himself by one of the

windows of the gallery, which communicated with the terraces, and the fair Julia by his side.

"Is it an Athenian virtue, Glaucus," said the merchant's daughter, "to shun those whom we once sought?"

"Fair Julia—no!"

"Yet, methinks, it is one of the qualities of Glaucus."

"Glaucus never shuns a *friend*!" replied the Greek, with some emphasis on the last word.

"May Julia rank among the number of his friends!"

"It would be an honour to the emperor to find a friend in one so lovely."

"You evade my question," returned the enamoured Julia. "But tell me, is it true that you admire the Neapolitan Ione?"

"Does not beauty constrain our admiration?"

"Ah! subtle Greek, still do you fly the meaning of my words. But say, shall Julia be indeed your friend?"

"If she will so favour me, blessed be the gods! The day in which I am thus honoured shall be ever marked in white."

"Yet, even while you speak, your eye is restless—your colour comes and goes—you move away involuntarily—you are impatient to join Ione!"

For at that moment Ione had entered, and Glaucus had indeed betrayed the emotion noticed by the jealous beauty.

"Can admiration to one woman make me unworthy the friendship of another? Sanction not so, O Julia, the libels of the poets on your sex!"

"Well, you are right—or I will learn to think so. Glaucus, yet one moment! You are to wed Ione; is it not so?"

"If the Fates permit, such is my blessed hope."

"Accept, then, from me, in token of our new friendship, a present for your bride. Nay, it is the custom of friends, you know, always to present to bride and bridegroom some such little marks of their esteem and favouring wishes."

"Julia! I cannot refuse any token of friendship from one like you. I will accept the gift as an omen from Fortune herself."

"Then, after the feast, when the guests retire, you will descend with me to my apartment, and receive it from my hands. Remember!" said Julia, as she joined the wife of Pansa, and left Glaucus to seek Ione.

The widow Fulvia and the spouse of the ædile were engaged in high and grave discussion.

"O Fulvia! I assure you that the last account from Rome declares that the frizzling mode of dressing the hair is growing antiquated; they only now wear it built up in a tower, like Julia's, or arranged as a helmet—the *Galerian* fashion, like mine, you see: it has a fine effect, I think. I assure you, Vespius (Vespius was the name of the Herculaneum hero) admires it greatly."

"And nobody wears the hair like yon Neapolitan, in the Greek way."

"What, parted in front, with the knot behind?"

Oh no ; how ridiculous it is ! it reminds one of the statue of Diana ! Yet this Ione is handsome, eh ?”

“So the men say ; but then she is rich : she is to marry the Athenian—I wish her joy. He will not be long faithful, I suspect ; those foreigners are very faithless.”

“Oh, Julia !” said Fulvia, as the merchant’s daughter joined them ; “have you seen the tiger yet ?”

“No.”

“Why, all the ladies have been to see him. He is so handsome.”

“I hope we shall find some criminal or other for him and the lion.” replied Julia. “Your husband (turning to Pansa’s wife) is not so active as he should be in this matter.”

“Why, really, the laws are too mild,” replied the dame of the helmet. “There are so few offences to which the punishment of the arena can be awarded ; and then, too, the gladiators are growing effeminate ! The stoutest bestiarii declare they are willing enough to fight a boar or a bull ; but as for a lion or a tiger, they think the game too much in earnest.”

“They are worthy of a mitre,” * replied Julia, in disdain.

“Oh ! have you seen the new house of Fulvius, the dear poet ?” said Pansa’s wife.

“No ; is it handsome ?”

“Very !—such good taste. But they say, my dear,

* Mitres were worn sometimes by men, and considered a great mark of effeminacy.

that he has such improper pictures ! He won't show them to the women : how ill-bred !”

“Those poets are always odd,” said the widow. “But he is an interesting man ; what pretty verses he writes ! We improve very much in poetry ; it is impossible to read the old stuff now.”

“I declare I am of your opinion,” returned the lady of the helmet. “There is so much more force and energy in the modern school.”

The warrior sauntered up to the ladies.

“It reconciles me to peace,” said he, “when I see such faces.”

“Oh ! you heroes are ever flatterers,” returned Fulvia, hastening to appropriate the compliment specially to herself.

“By this chain, which I received from the emperor's own hand,” replied the warrior, playing with a short chain which hung round the neck like a collar, instead of descending to the breast, according to the fashion of the peaceful—“By this chain, you wrong me ! I am a blunt man—a soldier should be so.”

“How do you find the ladies of Pompeii generally ?” said Julia.

“By Venus, most beautiful ! They favour me a little, it is true, and that inclines my eyes to double their charms.”

“We love a warrior,” said the wife of Pansa.

“I see it : by Hercules ! it is even disagreeable to be too celebrated in these cities. At Herculaneum they climb the roof of my atrium to catch a glimpse

of me through the compluvium ; the admiration of one's citizens is pleasant at first, but burthensome afterwards."

"True, true, O Vespian!" cried the poet, joining the group: "I find it so myself."

"You!" said the stately warrior, scanning the small form of the poet with ineffable disdain. "In what legion have *you* served?"

"You may see my spoils, my exuviae, in the forum itself," returned the poet, with a significant glance at the women. "I have been among the tent-companions, the *contubernales*, of the great Mantuan himself."

"I know no general from Mantua," said the warrior, gravely. "What campaign have you served?"

"That of Helicon."

"I never heard of it."

"Nay, Vespian, he does but joke," said Julia, laughing.

"Joke! By Mars! am I a man to be joked?"

"Yes; Mars himself was in love with the mother of jokes," said the poet, a little alarmed. "Know then, O Vespian! that I am the poet Fulvius. It is I who makes warriors immortal!"

"The gods forbid!" whispered Sallust to Julia. "If Vespian were made immortal, what a specimen of tiresome braggadocio would be transmitted to posterity!"

The soldier looked puzzled; when, to the infinite relief of himself and his companions, the signal for the feast was given.

As we have already witnessed at the house of Glaucus the ordinary routine of a Pompeian entertainment, the reader is spared any second detail of the courses, and the manner in which they were introduced.

Diomed, who was rather ceremonious, had appointed a nomenclator, or appointer of places, to each guest.

The reader understands that the festive board was composed of three tables; one at the centre, and one at each wing. It was only at the outer side of these tables that the guests reclined; the inner space was left untenanted, for the greater convenience of the waiters or ministri. The extreme corner of one of the wings was appropriated to Julia as the lady of the feast; that next her, to Diomed. At one corner of the centre table was placed the ædile; at the opposite corner, the Roman senator—these were the posts of honour. The other guests were arranged, so that the young (gentleman or lady) should sit next each other, and the more advanced in years be similarly matched. An agreeable provision enough, but one which must often have offended those who wished to be thought still young.

The chair of Ione was next to the couch of Glaucus.* The seats were veneered with tortoise-shell, and covered with quilts stuffed with feathers, and ornamented with costly embroideries. The modern ornaments of epergne or plateau were supplied by images of the gods, wrought

* In formal parties the women sat in chairs,—the men reclined. It was only in the bosom of families that the same ease was granted to both sexes—the reason is obvious.

in bronze, ivory, and silver. The sacred salt-cellar and the familiar Lares were not forgotten. Over the table and the seats, a rich canopy was suspended from the ceiling. At each corner of the table were lofty candelabras—for though it was early noon, the room was darkened—while from tripods, placed in different parts of the room, distilled the odour of myrrh and frankincense; and upon the abacus, or sideboard, large vases and various ornaments of silver were ranged, much with the same ostentation (but with more than the same taste) that we find displayed at a modern feast.

The custom of grace was invariably supplied by that of libations to the gods; and Vesta, as queen of the household gods, usually received first that graceful homage.

This ceremony being performed, the slaves showered flowers upon the couches and the floor, and crowned each guest with rosy garlands, intricately woven with ribbons, tied by the rind of the linden-tree, and each intermingled with the ivy and the amethyst—supposed preventives against the effect of wine; the wreaths of the women only were exempted from these leaves, for it was not the fashion for them to drink wine *in public*. It was then that the president Diomed thought it advisable to institute a *basileus*, or director of the feast—an important office, sometimes chosen by lot; sometimes, as now, by the master of the entertainment.

Diomed was not a little puzzled as to his election. The invalid senator was too grave and too infirm for the proper fulfilment of his duty; the ædile Pansa was

adequate enough to the task ; but then, to choose the next in official rank to the senator, was an affront to the senator himself. While deliberating between the merits of the others, he caught the mirthful glance of Sallust, and, by a sudden inspiration, named the jovial epicure to the rank of director, or *arbiter bibendi*.

Sallust received the appointment with becoming humility.

"I shall be a merciful king," said he, "to those who drink deep ; to a recusant, Minos himself shall be less inexorable. Beware !"

The slaves handed round basins of perfumed water, by which lavation the feast commenced : and now the table groaned under the initiatory course.

The conversation, at first desultory and scattered, allowed Ione and Glaucus to carry on those sweet whispers, which are worth all the eloquence in the world. Julia watched them with flashing eyes.

"How soon shall her place be mine !" thought she.

But Clodius, who sat in the centre table, so as to observe well the countenance of Julia, guessed her pique, and resolved to profit by it. He addressed her across the table in set phrases of gallantry ; and as he was of high birth and of a showy person, the vain Julia was not so much in love as to be insensible to his attentions.

The slaves, in the interim, were constantly kept upon the alert by the vigilant Sallust, who chased one cup by another with a celerity which seemed as if he were resolved upon exhausting those capacious cellars

which the reader may yet see beneath the house of Diomed. The worthy merchant began to repent his choice, as amphora after amphora was pierced and emptied. The slaves, all under the age of manhood (the youngest being about ten years old,—it was they who filled the wine,—the eldest, some five years older, mingled it with water), seemed to share in the zeal of Sallust; and the face of Diomed began to glow as he watched the provoking complacency with which they seconded the exertions of the king of the feast.

“Pardon me, O senator!” said Sallust: “I see you flinch; your purple hem cannot save you—drink!”

“By the gods!” said the senator, coughing, “my lungs are already on fire; you proceed with so miraculous a swiftness, that Phaeton himself was nothing to you. I am infirm, O pleasant Sallust: you must exonerate me.”

“Not I, by Vesta! I am an impartial monarch—drink!”

The poor senator, compelled by the laws of the table, was forced to comply. Alas! every cup was bringing him nearer and nearer to the Stygian pool.

“Gently! gently! my king,” groaned Diomed; “we already begin to——”

“Treason!” interrupted Sallust; “no stern Brutus here!—no interference with loyalty!”

“But our female guests——”

“Love a toper! Did not Ariadne dote upon Bacchus?”

The feast proceeded; the guests grew more talkative

and noisy ; the dessert or last course was already on the table ; and the slaves bore round water with myrrh and hyssop for the finishing lavation. At the same time, a small circular table that had been placed in the space opposite the guests, suddenly, and as by magic, seemed to open in the centre, and cast up a fragrant shower, sprinkling the table and the guests ; while, as it ceased, the awning above them was drawn aside, and the guests perceived that a rope had been stretched across the ceiling, and that one of those nimble dancers for which Pompeii was so celebrated, and whose descendants add so charming a grace to the festivities of Astley's or Vauxhall, was now treading his airy measures right over their heads.

This apparition, removed but by a cord from one's pericranium, and indulging the most vehement leaps, apparently with the intention of alighting upon that cerebral region, would probably be regarded with some terror by a party in May Fair ; but our Pompeian revellers seemed to behold the spectacle with delighted curiosity, and applauded in proportion as the dancer appeared with the most difficulty to miss falling upon the head of whatever guest he particularly selected to dance above. He paid the senator, indeed, the peculiar compliment of literally falling from the rope, and catching it again with his hand, just as the whole party imagined the skull of the Roman was as much fractured as ever that of the poet whom the eagle took for a tortoise. At length, to the great relief of at least

Ione, who had not much accustomed herself to this entertainment, the dancer suddenly paused as a strain of music was heard from without. He danced again still more wildly; the air changed, the dancer paused again; no, it could not dissolve the charm which was supposed to possess him! He represented one who by a strange disorder is compelled to dance, and whom only a certain air of music can cure.* At length the musician seemed to hit on the right tune; the dancer gave one leap, swung himself down from the rope, alighted on the floor, and vanished.

One art now yielded to another; and the musicians who were stationed without on the terrace struck up a soft and mellow air, to which were sung the following words, made almost indistinct by the barrier between, and the exceeding lowness of the minstrelsy:—

FESTIVE MUSIC SHOULD BE LOW.

I.

“Hark! through these flowers our music sends its greeting
 To your loved halls, where Psilas † shuns the day;
 When the young god his Cretan nymph was meeting
 He taught Pan’s rustic pipe this gliding lay
 Soft as the dew’s of wine
 Shed in this banquet hour,
 The rich libation of Sound’s stream divine,
 O reverent harp, to Aphrodite pour!

II.

Wild rings the trump o’er ranks to glory marching;
 Music’s sublimer bursts for war are meet;
 But sweet lips murmuring under wreaths o’er-arching,
 Find the low whispers like their own most sweet.

* A dance still retained in Campania.

† Bacchus.

Steal, my lulled music, steal
Like woman's half-heard tone,
So that whoe'er shall hear, shall think to feel
In thee the voice of lips that love his own."

At the end of that song Ione's cheek blushed more deeply than before, and Glaucus had contrived, under cover of the table, to steal her hand.

"It is a pretty song," said Fulvius, patronisingly.

"Ah! if *you* would oblige us!" murmured the wife of Pansa.

"Do you wish Fulvius to sing?" asked the king of the feast, who had just called on the assembly to drink the health of the Roman senator, a cup to each letter of his name.

"Can you ask?" said the matron, with a complimentary glance at the poet.

Sallust snapped his fingers, and whispering the slave who came to learn his orders, the latter disappeared, and returned in a few moments with a small harp in one hand, and a branch of myrtle in the other.

The slave approached the poet, and with a low reverence presented to him the harp.

"Alas! I cannot play," said the poet.

"Then you must sing to the myrtle. It is a Greek fashion: Diomed loves the Greeks—I love the Greeks—you love the Greeks—we all love the Greeks—and between you and me this is not the only thing we have stolen from them. However, I introduce this custom—I, the king: sing, subject, sing!"

The poet, with a bashful smile, took the myrtle in his hands, and after a short prelude sang as follows, in a pleasant and well-tuned voice :—

THE CORONATION OF THE LOVES.*

I.

“ The merry Loves one holiday
Were all at gambols madly ;
But Loves too long can seldom play
Without behaving sadly.
They laughed, they toyed, they romped about,
And then for change they all fell out.
Fie, fie ! how can they quarrel so ?
My Lesbia—ah, for shame, love !
Methinks 'tis scarce an hour ago
When we did just the same, love.

II.

The Loves, 'tis thought, were free till then,
They had no king or laws, dear ;
But gods, like men, should subject be,
Say all the ancient saws, dear.
And so our crew resolved, for quiet,
To choose a king to curb their riot.
A kiss : ah ! what a grievous thing
For both, methinks, 'twould be, child,
If I should take some prudish king,
And cease to be so free, child !

III.

Among their toys a Casque they found,
It was the helm of Ares ;
With horrent plumes the crest was crowned,
It frightened all the Lares.
So fine a king was never known—
They placed the helmet on the throne.

* Suggested by two Pompeian pictures in the museum at Naples, which represent a dove and a helmet enthroned by Cupids.

My girl, since Valour wins the world,
They chose a mighty master ;
But thy sweet flag of smiles unfurled
Would win the world much faster !

IV.

The Casque soon found the Loves too wild
A troop for him to school them ;
For warriors know how *one* such child
Has aye contrived to fool them.
They plagued him so, that in despair
He took a wife the plague to share.
If kings themselves thus find the strife
Of earth, unshared, severe, girl ;
Why just to halve the ills of life,
Come, take your partner here, girl.

V.

Within that room the Bird of Love
The whole affair had eyed then ;
The monarch hailed the royal dove,
And placed her by his side then :
What mirth amidst the Loves was seen !
'Long live,' they cried, 'our King and Queen !'
Ah ! Lesbia, would that thrones were mine,
And crowns to deck that brow, love !
And yet I know that heart of thine
For me is throne enow, love !

VI.

The urchins hoped to tease the mate
As they had teased the hero ;
But when the Dove in judgment sate
They found her worse than Nero !
Each look a frown, each word a law ;
The little subjects shook with awe.
In thee I find the same deceit ;—
Too late, alas ! a learner !
For where a mien more gently sweet ?
And where a tyrant sterner ?”

This song, which greatly suited the gay and lively fancy of the Pompeians, was received with considerable

applause, and the widow insisted on crowning her namesake with the very branch of myrtle to which he had sung. It was easily twisted into a garland, and the immortal Fulvius was crowned amidst the clapping of hands and shouts of *Io triumphe!* The song and the harp now circulated round the party, a new myrtle branch being handed about, stopping at each person who could be prevailed upon to sing.*

The sun began now to decline, though the revelers, who had worn away several hours, perceived it not in their darkened chamber; and the senator, who was tired, and the warrior, who had to return to Herculaneum, rising to depart, gave the signal for the general dispersion. "Tarry yet a moment, my friends," said Diomed; "if you will go so soon, you must at least take a share in our concluding game."

So saying, he motioned to one of the ministri, and whispering him, the slave went out, and presently returned with a small bowl containing various tablets carefully sealed, and, apparently, exactly similar. Each guest was to purchase one of these at the nominal price of the lowest piece of silver: and the sport of this lottery (which was the favourite diversion of Augustus, who introduced it) consisted in the inequality, and sometimes the incongruity, of the prizes, the nature and amount of which were specified within

* According to Plutarch (*Sympos.* lib. i.) it seems that the branch of myrtle or laurel was not carried round in order, but passed from the first person on one couch to the first on another, and then from the second on the one to the second on the other, and so on.

the tablets. For instance, the poet, with a wry face, drew one of his own poems (no physician ever less willingly swallowed his own draught); the warrior drew a case of bodkins, which gave rise to certain novel witticisms relative to Hercules and the distaff; the widow Fulvia obtained a large drinking-cup; Julia, a gentleman's buckle; and Lepidus, a lady's patch-box. The most appropriate lot was drawn by the gambler Clodius, who reddened with anger on being presented to a set of cogged dice.* A certain damp was thrown upon the gaiety which these various lots created by an accident that was considered ominous; Glaucus drew the most valuable of all the prizes, a small marble statue of Fortune, of Grecian workmanship: on handing it to him the slave suffered it to drop, and it broke in pieces.

A shiver went round the assembly, and each voice cried spontaneously on the gods to avert the omen.

Glaucus alone, though perhaps as superstitious as the rest, affected to be unmoved.

"Sweet Neapolitan," whispered he tenderly to Ione, who had turned pale as the broken marble itself, "I *accept* the omen. It signifies, that in obtaining thee, Fortune can give no more,—she breaks *her* image when she blesses me with *thine*."

In order to divert the impression which this incident had occasioned in an assembly which, considering the

* Several cogged dice were found in Pompeii. Some of the virtues may be modern, but it is quite clear that all the vices are ancient.

civilisation of the guests, would seem miraculously superstitious, if at the present day in a country party we did not often see a lady grow hypochondriacal on leaving a room last of thirteen, Sallust now crowning his cup with flowers gave the health of their host. This was followed by a similar compliment to the emperor; and then, with a parting cup to Mercury to send them pleasant slumbers, they concluded the entertainment by a last libation, and broke up the party.

Carriages and litters were little used in Pompeii, partly owing to the extreme narrowness of the streets, partly to the convenient smallness of the city. Most of the guests replacing their sandals, which they had put off in the banquet-room, and inducing their cloaks, left the house on foot attended by their slaves.

Meanwhile, having seen Ione depart, Glaucus turning to the staircase which led down to the rooms of Julia, was conducted by a slave to an apartment in which he found the merchant's daughter already seated.

"Glaucus!" said she, looking down, "I see that you really love Ione—she is indeed beautiful."

"Julia is charming enough to be generous," replied the Greek. "Yes, I love Ione; amidst all the youth who court you, may you have one worshipper as sincere."

"I pray the gods to grant it! See, Glaucus, these pearls are the present I destine to your bride: may Juno give her health to wear them!"

So saying, she placed a case in his hand, containing a row of pearls of some size and price. It was so much

the custom for persons about to be married to receive these gifts, that Glaucus could have little scruple in accepting the necklace, though the gallant and proud Athenian inly resolved to requite the gift by one of thrice its value. Julia then stopping short his thanks, poured forth some wine into a small bowl.

“You have drunk many toasts with my father,” said she, smiling,—“one now with me. Health and fortune to your bride!”

She touched the cup with her lips, and then presented it to Glaucus. The customary etiquette required that Glaucus should drain the whole contents; he accordingly did so. Julia, unknowing the deceit which Nydia had practised upon her, watched him with sparkling eyes; although the witch had told her that the effect *might* not be immediate, she yet sanguinely trusted to an expeditious operation in favour of her charms. She was disappointed when she found Glaucus coldly replace the cup, and converse with her in the same unmoved but gentle tone as before. And though she detained him as long as she decorously could do, no change took place in his manner.

“But to-morrow,” thought she, exultingly recovering her disappointment,—“to-morrow, alas for Glaucus!”

Alas for him, indeed!

CHAPTER IV.

The Story halts for a moment at an Episode.

RESTLESS and anxious, Apæcides consumed the day in wandering through the most sequestered walks in the vicinity of the city. The sun was slowly setting as he paused beside a lonely part of the Sarnus, ere yet it wound amidst the evidences of luxury and power. Only through openings in the woods and vines were caught glimpses of the white and gleaming city, in which was heard in the distance no din, no sound, nor "busiest hum of men." Amidst the green banks crept the lizard and the grasshopper, and here and there in the brake some solitary bird burst into sudden song, as suddenly stilled. There was deep calm around, but not the calm of night; the air still breathed of the freshness and life of day; the grass still moved to the stir of the insect horde; and on the opposite bank the graceful and white capella passed browsing through the herbage, and paused at the wave to drink.

As Apæcides stood musingly gazing upon the waters, he heard beside him the low bark of a dog.

"Be still, poor friend," said a voice at hand; "the stranger's step harms not thy master." The convert

recognised the voice, and, turning, he beheld the old mysterious man whom he had seen in the congregation of the Nazarenes.

The old man was sitting upon a fragment of stone covered with ancient mosses ; beside him were his staff and scrip ; at his feet lay a small shaggy dog, the companion in how many a pilgrimage perilous and strange.

The face of the old man was as balm to the excited spirit of the neophyte : he approached, and craving his blessing, sat down beside him.

"Thou art provided as for a journey, father," said he : "wilt thou leave us yet ?"

"My son," replied the old man, "the days in store for me on earth are few and scanty ; I employ them as becomes me, travelling from place to place, comforting those whom God has gathered together in His name, and proclaiming the glory of His Son, as testified to His servant."

"Thou hast looked, they tell me, on the face of Christ ?"

"And the face revived me from the dead. Know, young proselyte to the true faith, that I am he of whom thou readest in the scroll of the Apostle. In the far Judea, and in the city of Nain, there dwelt a widow, humble of spirit and sad of heart ; for of all the ties of life one son alone was spared to her. And she loved him with a melancholy love, for he was the likeness of the lost. And the son died. The reed on which she leaned was broken, the oil was dried up in the widow's cruse. They bore the dead upon his bier ; and near

the gate of the city, where the crowd were gathered, there came a silence over the sounds of woe, for the Son of God was passing by. The mother, who followed the bier, wept—not noisily, but all who looked upon her saw that her heart was crushed. And the Lord pitied her, and He touched the bier, and said, ‘I SAY UNTO THEE, ARISE.’ And the dead man woke and looked upon the face of the Lord. Oh, that calm and solemn brow, that unutterable smile, that careworn and sorrowful face, lighted up with a God’s benignity—it chased away the shadows of the grave! I rose, I spoke, I was living, and in my mother’s arms—yes, *I* am the dead revived! The people shouted, the funeral horns rung forth merrily: there was a cry, ‘God has visited His people!’ I heard them not—I felt—I saw—nothing—but the face of the Redeemer!”

The old man paused, deeply moved; and the youth felt his blood creep, and his hair stir. He was in the presence of one who had known the Mystery of Death!

“Till that time,” renewed the widow’s son, “I had been as other men: thoughtless, not abandoned; taking no heed, but of the things of love and life; nay, I had inclined to the gloomy faith of the earthly Sadducee! But, raised from the dead, from awful and desert dreams that these lips never dare reveal—recalled upon earth, to testify the powers of Heaven—once more mortal, the witness of immortality; I drew a new being from the grave. O faded—O lost Jerusalem!—Him from whom came my life, I beheld adjudged to the agonised and parching death!—Far in the mighty

crowd, I saw the light rest and glimmer over the cross; I heard the hooting mob, I cried aloud, I raved, I threatened—none heeded me—I was lost in the whirl and the roar of thousands! But even then, in my agony and His own, methought the glazing eye of the Son of Man sought me out—His lip smiled, as when it conquered death—it hushed me, and I became calm. He who had defied the grave for another—what was the grave to Him? The sun shone aslant the pale and powerful features, and then died away! Darkness fell over the earth; how long it endured, I know not. A loud cry came through the gloom—a sharp and bitter cry!—and all was silent.

“But who shall tell the terrors of the night? I walked along the city—the earth reeled to and fro, and the houses trembled to their base—the living had deserted the streets, but *not the Dead*: through the gloom I saw them glide—the dim and ghastly shapes, in the cerements of the grave—with horror, and woe, and warning on their unmoving lips and lightless eyes!—they swept by me, as I passed—they glared upon me—I had been their brother; and they bowed their heads in recognition; they had risen to tell the living that the dead *can* rise!”

Again the old man paused, and when he resumed, it was in a calmer tone.

“From that night I resigned all earthly thought but that of serving HIM. A preacher and a pilgrim, I have traversed the remotest corners of the earth, proclaiming His Divinity, and bringing new converts to His fold.

I come as the wind, and as the wind depart ; sowing, as the wind sows, the seeds that enrich the world.

“Son, on earth we shall meet no more. Forget not this hour—what are the pleasures and the pomps of life ! As the lamp shines, so life glitters for an hour ; but the soul’s light is the star that burns for ever, in the heart of illimitable space.”

It was then that their conversation fell upon the general and sublime doctrines of immortality ; it soothed and elevated the young mind of the convert, which yet clung to many of the damps and shadows of that cell of faith which he had so lately left—it was the air of heaven breathing on the prisoner released at last. There was a strong and marked distinction between the Christianity of the old man and that of Olinthus ; that of the first was more soft, more gentle, more divine. The hard heroism of Olinthus had something in it fierce and intolerant—it was necessary to the part he was destined to play—it had in it more of the courage of the martyr than the charity of the saint. It aroused, it excited, it nerved, rather than subdued and softened. But the whole heart of that divine old man was bathed in love ; the smile of the Deity had burned away from it the leaven of earthlier and coarser passions, and left to the energy of the hero all the meekness of the child.

“And now,” said he, rising at length, as the sun’s last ray died in the west ; “now, in the cool of twilight, I pursue my way towards the Imperial Rome. There yet dwell some holy men, who like me have be-

held the face of Christ; and then would I see before I die."

"But the night is chill for thine age, my father, and the way is long, and the robber haunts it; rest thee till to-morrow."

"Kind son, what is there in this scrip to tempt the robber? And the Night and the Solitude!—*these* make the ladder round which angels cluster, and beneath which my spirit can dream of God. Oh! none can know what the pilgrim feels as he walks on his holy course; nursing no fear, and dreading no danger—for God is with him! He hears the winds murmur glad tidings; the woods sleep in the shadow of Almighty wings;—the stars are the Scriptures of Heaven, the tokens of love, and the witnesses of immortality. Night is the Pilgrim's day." With these words the old man pressed Apæcides to his breast, and taking up his staff and scrip, the dog bounded cheerily before him, and with slow steps and downcast eyes he went his way.

The convert stood watching his bended form, till the trees shut the last glimpse from his view: and then, as the stars broke forth, he woke from the musings with a start, reminded of his appointment with Olinthus.

CHAPTER V.

The Philtre — its Effect.

WHEN Glaucus arrived at his own home, he found Nydia seated under the portico of his garden. In fact, she had sought his house in the mere chance that he *might* return at an early hour: anxious, fearful, anticipative, she resolved upon seizing the earliest opportunity of availing herself of the love-charm, while at the same time she half hoped the opportunity might be deferred.

It was then, in that fearful burning mood, her heart beating, her cheek flushing, that Nydia awaited the possibility of Glaucus's return before the night. He crossed the portico just as the first stars began to rise, and the heaven above had assumed its most purple robe.

"Ho, my child! wait you for me?"

"Nay, I have been tending the flowers, and did but linger a little while to rest myself."

"It has been warm," said Glaucus, placing himself also on one of the seats beneath the colonnade.

"Very."

"Wilt thou summon Davus? The wine I have drunk heats me, and I long for some cooling drink."

Here at once, suddenly and unexpectedly, the very opportunity that Nydia awaited presented itself; of himself, at his own free choice, he afforded to her that occasion. She breathed quick—"I will prepare for you myself," said she, "the summer draught that Ione loves—of honey and weak wine cooled in snow."

"Thanks," said the unconscious Glaucus. "If Ione love it, enough; it would be grateful were it poison."

Nydia frowned, and then smiled; she withdrew for a few moments, and returned with the cup containing the beverage. Glaucus took it from her hand. What would not Nydia have given then for one hour's prerogative of sight, to have watched her hopes ripening to effect;—to have seen the first dawn of the imagined love;—to have worshipped with more than Persian adoration the rising of that sun which her credulous soul believed was to break upon her dreary night! Far different, as she stood then and there, were the thoughts, the emotions of the blind girl, from those of the vain Pompeian under a similar suspense. In the last, what poor and frivolous passions had made up the daring whole! What petty pique, what small revenge, what expectation of a paltry triumph, had swelled the attributes of that sentiment she dignified with the name of love! but in the wild heart of the Thessalian all was pure, uncontrolled, unmodified passion;—erring, unwomanly, frenzied, but debased by no elements of a more sordid feeling. Filled with love as with life itself, how could she resist the occasion of winning love in return!

She leaned for support against the wall, and her face, before so flushed, was now white as snow ; and with her delicate hands clasped convulsively together, her lips apart, her eyes on the ground, she waited the next words Glaucus should utter.

Glaucus had raised the cup to his lips, he had already drained about a fourth of its contents, when his eye suddenly glancing upon the face of Nydia, he was so forcibly struck by its alteration, by its intense, and painful, and strange expression, that he paused abruptly, and, still holding the cup near his lips, exclaimed—

“ Why, Nydia ! Nydia ! I say, art thou ill or in pain ? Nay, thy face speaks for thee. What ails my poor child ? ” As he spoke, he put down the cup and rose from his seat to approach her, when a sudden pang shot coldly to his heart, and was followed by a wild, confused, dizzy sensation at the brain. The floor seemed to glide from under him—his feet seemed to move on air—a mighty and unearthly gladness rushed upon his spirit—he felt too buoyant for the earth—he longed for wings, nay, it seemed in the buoyancy of his new existence, as *if* he possessed them. He burst involuntarily into a loud and thrilling laugh. He clapped his hands—he bounded aloft—he was a Pythoness inspired ; suddenly as it came this preternatural transport passed, though only partially, away. He now felt his blood rushing loudly and rapidly through his veins ; it seemed to swell, to exult, to leap along, as a stream that has burst its bounds,

and hurries to the ocean. It throbbed in his ear with a mighty sound, he felt it mount to his brow, he felt the veins in the temples stretch and swell as if they could no longer contain the violent and increasing tide—then a kind of darkness fell over his eyes—darkness, but not entire ; for through the dim shade he saw the opposite walls glow out, and the figures painted thereon seemed, ghost-like, to creep and glide. What was most strange, he did not feel himself *ill*—he did not sink or quail beneath the dread frenzy that was gathering over him. The novelty of the feelings seemed bright and vivid—he felt as if a younger health had been infused into his frame. He was gliding on to madness—and he knew it not !

Nydia had not answered his first question—she had not been able to reply—his wild and fearful laugh had roused her from her passionate suspense : she could not see his fierce gesture—she could not mark his reeling and unsteady step as he paced unconsciously to and fro ; but she heard the words, broken, incoherent, insane, that gushed from his lips. She became terrified and appalled—she hastened to him, feeling with her arms until she touched his knees, and then falling on the ground she embraced them, weeping with terror and excitement.

“ Oh, speak to me ! speak ! you do not hate me ?—speak, speak ! ”

“ By the bright goddess, a beautiful land this Cyprus ! Ho ! how they fill us with wine instead of blood ! now they open the veins of the Faun yonder,

to show how the tide within bubbles and sparkles. Come hither, jolly old god! thou ridest on a goat, eh?—what long silky hair he has! He is worth all the coursers of Parthia. But a word with thee—this wine of thine is too strong for us mortals. Oh! beautiful! the boughs are at rest! the green waves of the forest have caught the Zephyr and drowned him! Not a breath stirs the leaves—and I view the Dreams sleeping with folded wings upon the motionless elm; and I look beyond, and I see a blue stream sparkle in the silent noon; a fountain—a fountain springing aloft! Ah! my fount, thou wilt not put out the rays of my Grecian sun, though thou triest ever so hard with thy nimble and silver arms. And now, what form steals yonder through the bows? she glides like a moonbeam!—she has a garland of oak-leaves on her head. In her hand is a vase upturned, from which she pours pink and tiny shells, and sparkling water. Oh! look on yon face! Man never before saw its like. See! we are alone; only I and she in the wide forest. There is no smile upon her lips—she moves, grave and sweetly sad. Ha! fly, it is a nymph!—it is one of the wild Napææ!* Whoever sees her becomes mad—fly! see, she discovers me!”

“Oh! Glaucus! Glaucus! do you not know me? Rave not so wildly, or thou wilt kill me with a word!”

A new change seemed now to operate upon the jarring and disordered mind of the unfortunate

* Presiding over hills and woods.

Athenian. He put his hands upon Nydia's silken hair; he smoothed the locks—he looked wistfully upon her face, and then, as in the broken chain of thought one or two links were yet unsevered, it seemed that her countenance brought its associations of Ione; and with that remembrance his madness became yet more powerful, and it was swayed and tinged by passion, as he burst forth,—

“I swear by Venus, by Diana, and by Juno, that though I have now the world on my shoulders, as my countryman Hercules (ah, dull Rome! whoever was truly great was of Greece; why, you would be godless if it were not for us!)—I say, as my countryman Hercules had before me, I would let it fall into chaos for one smile from Ione. Ah, Beautiful—Adored,” he added, in a voice inexpressibly fond and plaintive, “thou lovest me not. Thou art unkind to me. The Egyptian hath belied me to thee—thou knowest not what hours I have spent beneath thy casement—thou knowest not how I have outwatched the stars, thinking thou, my sun, wouldst rise at last,—and thou lovest me not, thou forsakest me! Oh! do not leave me now! I feel that my life will not be long; let me gaze on thee at least unto the last. I am of the bright land of thy fathers—I have trod the heights of Phyle—I have gathered the hyacinth and rose amidst the olive-groves of Ilyssus. *Thou* shouldst not desert me, for thy fathers were brothers to my own. And they say this land is lovely, and these climes serene, but I will bear thee with me—Ho! dark form, why risest thou like a

cloud between me and mine ? Death sits calmly dread upon thy brow—on thy lip is the smile that slays : thy name is Orcus, but on earth men call thee Arbaces. See, I know thee ! fly, dim shadow, thy spells avail not ! ”

“ Glaucus ! Glaucus ! ” murmured Nydia, releasing her hold and falling, beneath the excitement of her dismay, remorse, and anguish, insensible on the floor.

“ Who calls ? ” said he, in a loud voice. “ Ione, it is she ! they have borne her off—we will save her—where is my stilus ? Ha, I have it ! I come, Ione, to thy rescue ! I come ! I come ! ”

So saying, the Athenian with one bound passed the portico, he traversed the house, and rushed with swift but vacillating steps, and muttering audibly to himself, down the starlit streets. The direful potion burnt like fire in his veins, for its effect was made, perhaps, still more sudden from the wine he had drunk previously. Used to the excesses of nocturnal revellers, the citizens, with smiles and winks, gave way to his reeling steps ; they naturally imagined him under the influence of the Bromian god, not vainly worshipped at Pompeii ; but they who looked twice upon his face, started in a nameless fear, and the smile withered from their lips. He passed the more populous streets ; and pursuing mechanically the way to Ione’s house, he traversed a more deserted quarter, and entered now the lonely grove of Cybele, in which Apæcides had held his interview with Olinthus.

CHAPTER VI.

A reunion of different Actors—Streams that flowed apparently apart rush into one Gulf.

IMPATIENT to learn whether the fell drug had yet been administered by Julia to his hated rival, and with what effect, Arbaces resolved, as the evening came on, to seek her house, and satisfy his suspense. It was customary, as I have before said, for men at that time to carry abroad with them the tablets and the stilus attached to their girdle; and with the girdle they were put off when at home. In fact, under the appearance of a literary instrument, the Romans carried about with them in that same stilus a very sharp and formidable weapon. It was with his stilus* that Cassius stabbed Cæsar in the senate-house. Taking, then, his girdle and his cloak, Arbaces left his house, supporting his steps, which were still somewhat feeble (though hope and vengeance had conspired greatly with his own medical science, which was profound, to restore his natural strength), by his long staff: Arbaces took his way to the villa of Diomed.

And beautiful is the moonlight of the south! In

* From this stilus may be derived the stiletto of the Italians.

those climes the night so quickly glides into the day, that twilight scarcely makes a bridge between them. One moment of darker purple in the sky—of a thousand rose-hues in the water—of shade half victorious over light; and then burst forth at once the countless stars—the moon is up—night has resumed her reign!

Brightly then, and softly bright, fell the moonbeams over the antique grove consecrated to Cybele—the stately trees, whose date went beyond tradition, cast their long shadows over the soil, while through the openings in their boughs the stars shone, still and frequent. The whiteness of the small sacellum in the centre of the grove, amidst the dark foliage, had in it something abrupt and startling; it recalled at once the purpose to which the wood was consecrated—its holiness and solemnity.

With a swift and stealthy pace, Calenus, gliding under the shade of the trees, reached the chapel, and gently putting back the boughs that completely closed around its rear, settled himself in his concealment; a concealment so complete, what with the fane in front and the trees behind, that no unsuspicious passenger could possibly have detected him. Again all was apparently solitary in the grove; afar off you heard faintly the voices of some noisy revellers, or the music that played cheerily to the groups that then, as now in those climates, during the nights of summer, lingered in the streets, and enjoyed, in the fresh air and the liquid moonlight, a milder day.

From the height on which the grove was placed, you

saw through the intervals of the trees the broad and purple sea, rippling in the distance, the white villas of Stabiae in the curving shore, and the dim Lectiarian hills mingling with the delicious sky. Presently the tall figure of Arbaces, in his way to the house of Diomed, entered the extreme end of the grove; and at the same instant Apæides, also bound to his appointment with Olinthus, crossed the Egyptian's path.

"Hem! Apæides," said Arbaces, recognising the priest at a glance; "when last we met, you were my foe. I have wished since then to see you, for I would have you still my pupil and my friend."

Apæides started at the voice of the Egyptian; and halting abruptly, gazed upon him with a countenance full of contending, bitter, and scornful emotions.

"Villain and impostor!" said he at length; "thou hast recovered then from the jaws of the grave! But think not again to weave around me thy guilty meshes. *Retiarius*, I am armed against thee!"

"Hush!" said Arbaces, in a very low voice—but his pride, which in that descendant of kings was great, betrayed the wound it received from the insulting epithets of the priest in the quiver of his lip and the flush of his tawny brow. "Hush! more low! thou mayest be overheard, and if other ears than mine had drunk those sounds—why——"

"Dost thou threaten?—what if the whole city had heard me?"

"The manes of my ancestors would not have suffered me to forgive thee. But, hold, and hear me. Thou

art enraged that I would have offered violence to thy sister.—Nay, peace, peace, but one instant, I pray thee. Thou art right; it was the frenzy of passion and of jealousy—I have repented bitterly of my madness. Forgive me; I, who never implored pardon of living man, beseech thee now to forgive me. Nay, I will atone the insult—I ask thy sister in marriage;—start not, consider,—what is the alliance of yon holiday Greek compared to mine? Wealth unbounded—birth that in its far antiquity leaves your Greek and Roman names the things of yesterday—science—but that thou knowest! Give me thy sister, and my whole life shall atone a moment's error.”

“Egyptian, were even I to consent, my sister loathes the very air thou breathest: but I have my own wrongs to forgive—I may pardon thee that thou hast made me a tool to thy deceits, but never that thou hast seduced me to become the abettor of thy vices—a—polluted and a perjured man. Tremble!—even now I prepare the hour in which thou and thy false gods shall be unveiled. Thy lewd and Circèan life shall be dragged to day—thy mumming oracles disclosed—the fane of the idol Isis shall be a by-word and a scorn—the name of Arbaces a mark for the hisses of execration! Tremble!”

The flush on the Egyptian's brow was succeeded by a livid paleness. He looked behind, before, around, to feel assured that none were by; and then he fixed his dark and dilating eye on the priest, with such a gaze of wrath and menace, that one, perhaps, less supported than Apæcides by the fervent daring of a divine

zeal, could not have faced with unflinching look that lowering aspect. As it was, however, the young convert met it unmoved, and returned it with an eye of proud defiance.

“Apæcides,” said the Egyptian, in a tremulous and inward tone, “beware! What is it thou wouldst meditate? Speakest thou—reflect, pause before thou repliest—from the hasty influences of wrath, as yet divining no settled purpose, or from some fixed design?”

“I speak from the inspiration of the True God, whose servant I now am,” answered the Christian, boldly; “and in the knowledge that by His grace human courage has already fixed the date of thy hypocrisy and thy demon’s worship; ere thrice the sun has dawned, thou wilt know all! Dark sorcerer, tremble, and farewell!”

All the fierce and lurid passions which he inherited from his nation and his clime, at all times but ill concealed beneath the blandness of craft and the coldness of philosophy, were released in the breast of the Egyptian. Rapidly one thought chased another: he saw before him an obstinate barrier to even a lawful alliance with Ione—the fellow-champion of Glaucus in the struggle which had baffled his designs—the reviler of his name—the threatened desecrator of the goddess he served while he disbelieved—the avowed and approaching revealer of his own impostures and vices. His love, his repute, nay, his very life, might be in danger—the day and hour seemed even to have been fixed for some design against him. He knew by the words

of the convert that Apæcides had adopted the Christian faith : he knew the indomitable zeal which led on the proselytes of that creed. Such was his enemy ; he grasped his stilus—that enemy was in his power ! They were now before the chapel ; one hasty glance once more he cast around ; he saw none near,—silence and solitude alike tempted him.

“Die, then, in thy rashness !” he muttered ; “away, obstacle to my rushing fates !”

And just as the young Christian had turned to depart, Arbaces raised his hand high over the left shoulder of Apæcides, and plunged his sharp weapon twice into his breast.

Apæcides fell to the ground pierced to the heart—he fell mute, without even a groan, at the very base of the sacred chapel.

Arbaces gazed upon him for a moment with the fierce animal joy of conquest over a foe. But presently the full sense of the danger to which he was exposed flashed upon him ; he wiped his weapon carefully in the long grass, and with the very garments of his victim ; drew his cloak round him, and was about to depart, when he saw, coming up the path, right before him, the figure of a young man, whose steps reeled and vacillated strangely as he advanced : the quiet moonlight streamed full upon his face, which seemed, by the whitening ray, colourless as marble. The Egyptian recognised the face and form of Glaucus. The unfortunate and benighted Greek was chanting a disconnected and mad song, composed from snatches

of hymns and sacred odes, all jarringly woven together.

“Ha!” thought the Egyptian, instantaneously divining his state and its terrible cause; “so, then, the hell-draught works, and destiny hath sent thee hither to crush two of my foes at once!”

Quickly, even ere this thought occurred to him, he had withdrawn on one side of the chapel, and concealed himself amongst the boughs; from that lurking-place he watched, like a tiger in his lair, the advance of his second victim. He noted the wandering and restless fire in the bright and beautiful eyes of the Athenian; the convulsions that distorted his statue-like features, and writhed his hueless lip. He saw that the Greek was utterly deprived of reason. Nevertheless, as Glaucus came up to the dead body of Apæcides, from which the dark red stream flowed slowly over the grass, so strange and ghastly a spectacle could not fail to arrest him, benighted and erring as was his glimmering sense. He paused, placed his hand to his brow, as if to collect himself, and then saying—

“What ho! Endymion, sleepest thou so soundly? What has the moon said to thee? Thou makest me jealous; it is time to wake,”—he stooped down with the intention of lifting up the body.

Forgetting—feeling not—his own debility, the Egyptian sprung from his hiding-place, and, as the Greek bent, struck him forcibly to the ground, over the very body of the Christian; then, raising his powerful voice to its loudest pitch, he shouted—

“Ho, citizens—oh! help me!—run hither—hither!—A murder—a murder before your very fane! Help, or the murderer escapes!” As he spoke, he placed his foot on the breast of Glaucus: an idle and superfluous precaution; for the potion operating with the fall, the Greek lay there motionless and insensible, save that now and then his lips gave vent to some vague and raving sounds.

As he there stood awaiting the coming of those his voice still continued to summon, perhaps some remorse, some compunctious visitings—for despite his crimes, he was human—haunted the breast of the Egyptian; the defenceless state of Glaucus—his wandering words—his shattered reason, smote him even more than the death of Apæcides, and he said, half audibly, to himself—

“Poor clay!—poor human reason! *where is the soul now?* I could spare thee, O my rival—rival never more! But destiny must be obeyed—my safety demands thy sacrifice.” With that, as if to drown compunction, he shouted yet more loudly; and drawing from the girdle of Glaucus the stilus it contained, he steeped it in the blood of the murdered man, and laid it beside the corpse.

And now, fast and breathless, several of the citizens came thronging to the place, some with torches, which the moon rendered unnecessary, but which flared red and tremulously against the darkness of the trees: they surrounded the spot.

“Lift up yon corpse,” said the Egyptian, “and guard well the murderer.”

They raised the body, and great was their horror and sacred indignation to discover in that lifeless clay a priest of the adored and venerable Isis ; but still greater, perhaps, was their surprise, when they found the accused in the brilliant and admired Athenian.

"Glaucus !" cried the bystanders, with one accord ; "is it even credible ?"

"I would sooner," whispered one man to his neighbour, "believe it to be the Egyptian himself."

Here a centurion thrust himself into the gathering crowd, with an air of authority.

"How ! blood spilt ! who the murderer ?"

The bystanders pointed to Glaucus.

"He !—by Mars, he has rather the air of being the victim ! Who accuses him ?"

"*I*," said Arbaces, drawing himself up haughtily ; and the jewels which adorned his dress flashing in the eyes of the soldier, instantly convinced that worthy warrior of the witness's respectability.

"Pardon me—your name ?" said he.

"Arbaces—it is well known, methinks, in Pompeii. Passing through the grove, I beheld before me the Greek and the priest in earnest conversation. I was struck by the reeling motions of the first, his violent gestures, and the loudness of his voice ; he seemed to me either drunk or mad. Suddenly I saw him raise his stilus—I darted forward—too late to arrest the blow. He had twice stabbed his victim, and was bending over him, when, in my horror and indignation, I struck the murderer to the ground. He fell

without a struggle, which makes me yet more suspect that he was not altogether in his senses when the crime was perpetrated ; for, recently recovered from a severe illness, my blow was comparatively feeble, and the frame of Glaucus, as you see, is strong and youthful."

"His eyes are open now—his lips move," said the soldier. "Speak, prisoner ; what sayest thou to the charge?"

"The charge—ha—ha ! Why, it was merrily done ; when the old hag set her serpent at me, and Hecate stood by laughing from ear to ear—what could I do ? But I am ill—I faint—the serpent's fiery tongue hath bitten me. Bear me to bed, and send for your physician ; old Æsculapius himself will attend me if you let him know that I am Greek. Oh, mercy—mercy—I burn !—marrow and brain, I burn !"

And, with a thrilling and fierce groan, the Athenian fell back in the arms of the bystanders.

"He raves," said the officer, compassionately ; "and in his delirium he has struck the priest. Hath any one present seen him to-day?"

"I," said one of the spectators, "beheld him in the morning. He passed my shop and accosted me. He seemed well and sane as the stoutest of us."

"And I saw him half an hour ago," said another, "passing up the streets, muttering to himself with strange gestures, and just as the Egyptian has described."

"A corroboration of the witness ! it must be too

true. He must at all events to the prætor ; a pity, so young and so rich ! But the crime is dreadful : a priest of Isis, in his very robes, too, and at the base itself of our most ancient chapel ! ”

At these words the crowd were reminded more forcibly, than in their excitement and curiosity they had yet been, of the heinousness of the sacrilege. They shuddered in pious horror.

“ No wonder the earth has quaked,” said one, “ when it held such a monster ! ”

“ Away with him to prison—away ! ” cried they all. And one solitary voice was heard shrilly and joyously above the rest :—

“ The beasts will not want a gladiator now,

‘ Ho, ho ! for the merry, merry show ! ’ ”

It was the voice of the young woman whose conversation with Medon has been repeated.

“ True—true—it chances in season for the games ! ” cried several ; and at that thought all pity for the accused seemed vanished. His youth—his beauty, but fitted him better for the purpose of the arena.

Bring hither some planks—or if at hand, a litter—to bear the dead,” said Arbaces ; “ a priest of Isis ought scarcely to be carried to his temple by vulgar hands, like a butchered gladiator.”

At this the bystanders reverently laid the corpse of Apæcides on the ground, with the face upwards ; and some of them went in search of some contrivance to bear the body, untouched by the profane.

It was just at that time that the crowd gave way to right and left as a sturdy form forced itself through, and Olinthus the Christian stood immediately confronting the Egyptian. But his eyes, at first, only rested with inexpressible grief and horror on that gory side and upturned face, on which the agony of violent death yet lingered.

"Murdered!" he said. "Is it thy zeal that has brought thee to this? Have they detected thy noble purpose, and by death prevented their own shame?"

He turned his head abruptly, and his eyes fell full on the solemn features of the Egyptian.

As he looked, you might see in his face, and even the slight shiver of his frame, the repugnance and aversion which the Christian felt for one whom he knew to be so dangerous and so criminal. It was indeed the gaze of the bird upon the basilisk—so silent was it and so prolonged. But shaking off the sudden chill that had crept over him, Olinthus extended his right arm towards Arbaces, and said, in a deep and loud voice:—

"Murder hath been done upon this corpse! Where is the murderer? Stand forth, Egyptian! For, as the Lord liveth, I believe *thou* art the man!"

An anxious and perturbed change might for one moment be detected on the dusky features of Arbaces; but it gave way to the frowning expression of indignation and scorn, as, awed and arrested by the suddenness and vehemence of the charge, the spectators pressed nearer and nearer upon the two more prominent actors.

"I know," said Arbaces, proudly, "who is my ac-

cuser, and I guess wherefore he thus arraigns me. Men and citizens, know this man for the most bitter of the Nazarenes, if that or Christians be their proper name ! What marvel that in his malignity he dares accuse even an Egyptian of the murder of a priest of Egypt !”

“ I know him ! I know the dog !” shouted several voices. “ It is Olinthus the Christian — or rather the Atheist ;—he denies the gods !”

“ Peace, brethren,” said Olinthus, with dignity, “ and hear me ! This murdered priest of Isis before his death embraced the Christian faith — he revealed to me the dark sins, the sorceries of you Egyptian — the mummeries and delusions of the fane of Isis. He was about to declare them publicly. *He*, a stranger, unoffending, without enemies ! who should shed his blood but one of those who feared his witness ? Who might fear that testimony the most ?—Arbaces, the Egyptian !”

“ You hear him !” said Arbaces ; “ you hear him ! he blasphemers ! Ask him if he believes in Isis ?”

“ Do I believe in an evil demon ?” returned Olinthus, boldly.

A groan and shudder passed through the assembly. Nothing daunted, for prepared at every time for peril, and in the present excitement losing all prudence, the Christian continued—

“ Back, idolaters ! this clay is not for your vain and polluting rites : it is to us—to the followers of Christ, that the last offices due to a Christian belong. I claim this dust in the name of the great Creator who has recalled the spirit !”

With so solemn and commanding a voice and aspect the Christian spoke these words, that even the crowd forbore to utter aloud the execration of fear and hatred which in their hearts they conceived. And never, perhaps, since Lucifer and the Archangel contended for the body of the mighty Lawgiver, was there a more striking subject for the painter's genius than that scene exhibited. The dark trees—the stately fane—the moon full on the corpse of the deceased—the torches tossing wildly to and fro in the rear—the various faces of the motley audience—the insensible form of the Athenian, supported, in the distance ; and in the foreground, and above all, the forms of Arbaces and the Christian : the first drawn to its full height, far taller than the herd around ; his arms folded, his brow knit, his eyes fixed, his lip slightly curled in defiance and disdain. The last bearing, on a brow worn and furrowed, the majesty of an equal command—the features stern, yet frank—the aspect bold, yet open—the quiet dignity of the whole form impressed with an ineffable earnestness, hushed, as it were, in a solemn sympathy with the awe he himself had created. His left hand pointing to the corpse—his right hand raised to heaven.

The centurion pressed forward again.

“In the first place, hast thou, Olinthus, or whatever be thy name, any proof of the charge thou hast made against Arbaces, beyond thy vague suspicions?”

Olinthus remained silent—the Egyptian laughed contemptuously.

“Dost thou claim the body of a priest of Isis as one of the Nazarene or Christian sect?”

“I do.”

“Swear, then, by yon fane, yon statue of Cybele, by yon most ancient sacellum in Pompeii, that the dead man embraced your faith!”

“Vain man! I disown your idols! I abhor your temples! How can I swear by Cybele then?”

“Away, away with the atheist! away! the earth will swallow us, if we suffer these blasphemers in a sacred grove—away with him to death!”

“*To the beasts!*” added a female voice in the centre of the crowd; “*we shall have one a-piece now for the lion and tiger.*”

“If, O Nazarene, thou disbelievest in Cybele, which of our gods dost thou own?” resumed the soldier, unmoved by the cries around.

“None!”

“Hark to him! hark!” cried the crowd.

“O vain and blind!” continued the Christian, raising his voice; “can you believe in images of wood and stone? Do you imagine that they have eyes to see, or ears to hear, or hands to help ye? Is yon mute thing carved by man’s art a goddess!—hath it made mankind?—alas! by mankind was it made. Lo! convince yourselves of its nothingness—of your folly.”

And as he spoke, he strode across to the fane, and ere any of the bystanders were aware of his purpose, he, in his compassion or his zeal, struck the statue of wood from its pedestal.

"See!" cried he, "your goddess cannot avenge herself. Is this a thing to worship?"

Further words were denied to him: so gross and daring a sacrilege—of one, too, of the most sacred of their places of worship—filled even the most lukewarm with rage and horror. With one accord the crowd rushed upon him, seized, and but for the interference of the centurion, they would have torn him to pieces.

"Peace!" said the soldier, authoritatively,—“refer we this insolent blasphemer to the proper tribunal—time has been already wasted. Bear we both the culprits to the magistrates; place the body of the priest on the litter—carry it to his own home.”

At this moment a priest of Isis stepped forward. "I claim these remains, according to the custom of the priesthood."

"The flamen be obeyed," said the centurion. "How is the murderer?"

"Insensible or asleep."

"Were his crime less, I could pity him. On!"

Arbaces, as he turned, met the eye of that priest of Isis—it was Calenus; and something there was in that glance, so significant and sinister, that the Egyptian muttered to himself—

"Could he have witnessed the deed?"

A girl darted from the crowd, and gazed hard on the face of Olinthus. "*By Jupiter, a stout knave! I say, we shall have a man for the tiger now; one for each beast!*"

"Ho!" shouted the mob; "a man for the lion, and another for the tiger! What luck? Io Pæan!"

CHAPTER VII.

In which the Reader learns the Condition of Glaucus—Friendship tested—Enmity softened—Love the same—Because the one loving is blind.

THE night was somewhat advanced, and the gay lounging places of the Pompeians were still crowded. You might observe in the countenances of the various idlers a more earnest expression than usual. They talked in large knots and groups, as if they sought by numbers to divide the half-painful, half-pleasurable anxiety which belonged to the subject on which they conversed:—it was a subject of life and death.

A young man passed briskly by the graceful portico of the Temple of Fortune—so briskly, indeed, that he came with no slight force full against the rotund and comely form of that respectable citizen Diomed, who was retiring homeward to his suburban villa.

“Holba!” groaned the merchant, recovering with some difficulty his equilibrium; “have you no eyes? or do you think I have no feeling? By Jupiter! you have well-nigh driven out the divine particle; such another shock, and my soul will be in Hades!”

“Ah, Diomed! is it you? forgive my inadvertence.

I was absorbed in thinking of the reverses of life. Our poor friend, Glaucus, eh ! who could have guessed it ! ”

“ Well, but tell me, Clodius, is he really to be tried by the senate ? ”

“ Yes ; they say the crime is of so extraordinary a nature, that the senate itself must adjudge it ; and so the lictors are to induct him * formally.”

“ He has been accused publicly, then ? ”

“ To be sure ; where have you been not to hear that ? ”

“ Why, I have only just returned from Neapolis, whither I went on business the very morning after his crime ;—so shocking, and at my house the same night that it happened ! ”

“ There is no doubt of his guilt,” said Clodius, shrugging his shoulders ; “ and as these crimes take precedence of all little undignified peccadilloes, they will hasten to finish the sentence previous to the games.”

“ The games ! Good gods ! ” replied Diomed, with a slight shudder ; “ can they adjudge him to the beasts ? —so young, so rich ! ”

“ True ; but, then, he is a Greek. Had he been a Roman, it would have been a thousand pities. These foreigners can be borne with in their prosperity ; but in adversity we must not forget that they are in reality slaves. However, we of the upper classes are always tender-hearted ; and he would certainly get off tolerably well if he were left to us : for, between ourselves,

* Plin. Ep. ii. 11, 12 ; v. 4, 13.

what is a paltry priest of Isis!—what Isis herself? But the common people are superstitious; they clamour for the blood of the sacrilegious one. It is dangerous not to give way to public opinion.”

“And the blasphemer—the Christian, or Nazerene, or whatever else he be called?”

“Oh, poor dog! if he will sacrifice to Cybele, or Isis, he will be pardoned—if not, the tiger has him. At least, so I suppose; but the trial will decide. We talk while the urn’s still empty. And the Greek may yet escape the deadly Θ* of his own alphabet. But enough of this gloomy subject. How is the fair Julia?”

“Well, I fancy.”

“Commend me to her. But hark! the door yonder creaks on its hinges; it is the house of the prætor. Who comes forth? By Pollux! it is the Egyptian! What can he want with our official friend!”

“Some conference touching the murder, doubtless,” replied Diomed; “but what was supposed to be the inducement to the crime? Glaucus was to have married the priest’s sister.”

“Yes: some say Apæcides refused the alliance. It might have been a sudden quarrel. Glaucus was evidently drunk;—nay, so much so as to have been quite insensible when taken up, and I hear is still delirious—whether with wine, terror, remorse, the Furies, or the Bacchanals, I cannot say.”

* Θ, the initial of θάνατος (death), the condemning letter of the Greeks, as C was of the Romans.

“Poor fellow!—he has good counsel?”

“The best—Caius Pollio, an eloquent fellow enough. Pollio has been hiring all the poor gentlemen and well-born spendthrifts of Pompeii to dress shabbily and sneak about, swearing their friendship to Glaucus (who would not have spoken to them to be made emperor!—I will do him justice, he was a gentleman in his choice of acquaintance), and trying to melt the stony citizens into pity. But it will not do; Isis is mightily popular just at this moment.”

“And, by the by, I have some merchants at Alexandria. Yes, Isis ought to be protected.”

“True; so farewell, old gentleman: we shall meet soon; if not, we must have a friendly bet at the Amphitheatre. All my calculations are confounded by this cursed misfortune of Glaucus! He had bet on Lydon the gladiator; I must make up my tablets elsewhere. *Vale!*”

Leaving the less active Diomed to regain his villa, Clodius strode on, humming a Greek air, and perfuming the night with the odours that steamed from his snowy garments and flowing locks.

“If,” thought he, “Glaucus feed the lion, Julia will no longer have a person to love better than me; she will certainly doat on me;—and so, I suppose, I must marry. By the gods! the twelve lines begin to fail—men look suspiciously at my hand when it rattles the dice. That infernal Sallust insinuates cheating; and if it be discovered that the ivory is cogged, why farewell to the merry supper and the perfumed billet;—

Clodius is undone! Better marry, then, while I may, renounce gaming, and push my fortune (or rather the gentle Julia's) at the imperial court."

Thus muttering the schemes of his ambition, if by that high name the projects of Clodius may be called, the gamester found himself suddenly accosted; he turned and beheld the dark brow of Arbaces.

"Hail, noble Clodius! pardon my interruption; and inform me, I pray you, which is the house of Sallust?"

"It is but a few yards hence, wise Arbaces. But does Sallust entertain to-night?"

"I know not," answered the Egyptian; "nor am I, perhaps, one of those whom he would seek as a boon companion. But thou knowest that his house holds the person of Glaucus, the murderer."

"Ay! he, good-hearted epicure, believes in the Greek's innocence! You remind me that he has become his surety; and, therefore, till the trial, is responsible for his appearance.* Well, Sallust's house is better than a prison, especially that wretched hole in the forum. But for what can *you* seek Glaucus?"

"Why, noble Clodius, if we could save him from execution it would be well. The condemnation of the rich is a blow upon society itself. I should like to confer with him—for I hear he has recovered his senses—and ascertain the motives of his crime; they may be so extenuating as to plead in his defence."

"You are benevolent, Arbaces."

* If a criminal could obtain surety (called *vades* in capital offences), he was not compelled to lie in prison till after sentence.

"Benevolence is the duty of one who aspires to wisdom," replied the Egyptian, modestly. "Which way lies Sallust's mansion?"

"I will show you," said Clodius, "if you will suffer me to accompany you a few steps. But, pray what has become of the poor girl who was to have wed the Athenian—the sister of the murdered priest?"

"Alas! well-nigh insane. Sometimes she utters imprecations on the murderer—then suddenly stops short—then cries, 'But *why* curse? Oh, my brother! Glaucus was *not* thy murderer—never will I believe it!' Then she begins again, and again stops short, and mutters awfully to herself, 'Yet if it were indeed he?'"

"Unfortunate Ione!"

"But it is well for her that those solemn cares to the dead which religion enjoins have hitherto greatly absorbed her attention from Glaucus and herself: and, in the dimness of her senses, she scarcely seems aware that Glaucus is apprehended and on the eve of trial. When the funeral rites due to Apæcides are performed, her apprehension will return; and then I fear me much that her friends will be revolted by seeing her run to succour and aid the murderer of her brother!"

"Such scandal should be prevented."

"I trust I *have* taken precautions to that effect. I am her lawful guardian, and have just succeeded in obtaining permission to escort her, after the funeral of Apæcides, to my own house; there, please the gods! she will be secure."

“You have done well, sage Arbaces. And, now, yonder is the house of Sallust. The gods keep you! Yet, hark you, Arbaces—why so gloomy and unsocial? Men say you *can* be gay—why not let me initiate you into the pleasures of Pompeii?—I flatter myself no one knows them better.”

“I thank you, noble Clodius: under your auspices I might venture, I think, to wear the philyra: but, at my age, I should be an awkward pupil.”

“Oh, never fear; I have made converts of fellows of seventy. The rich, too, are never old.”

“You flatter me. At some future time I will remind you of your promise.”

“You may command Marcus Clodius at all times:—and so, *vale!*”

“Now,” said the Egyptian, soliloquising, “I am not wantonly a man of blood; I would willingly save this Greek, if, by confessing the crime, he will lose himself for ever to Ione, and for ever free me from the chance of discovery; and I *can* save him by persuading Julia to own the philtre, which will be held his excuse. But if he do not confess the crime, why Julia must be shamed from the confession, and he must die!—die, lest he prove my rival with the living—die, that he may be my proxy with the dead! Will he confess? can he not be persuaded that in his delirium he struck the blow? To me it would give far greater safety than even his death. Hem! we must hazard the experiment.”

SwEEPING along the narrow street, Arbaces now ap-

proached the house of Sallust, when he beheld a dark form wrapped in a cloak, and stretched at length across the threshold of the door.

So still lay the figure, and so dim was its outline, that any other than Arbaces might have felt a superstitious fear, lest he beheld one of those grim *lemures*, who, above all other spots, haunted the threshold of the homes they formerly possessed. But not for Arbaces were such dreams.

“Rise!” said he, touching the figure with his foot; “thou obstructest the way!”

“Ha! who art thou?” cried the form, in a sharp tone; and as she raised herself from the ground, the starlight fell full on the pale face and fixed but sightless eyes of Nydia the Thessalian. “Who art thou? I know the burden of thy voice.”

“Blind girl! what dost thou here at this late hour? Fie!—is this seeming thy sex or years? Home, girl!”

“I know thee,” said Nydia, in a low voice, “thou art Arbaces the Egyptian:” then, as if inspired by some sudden impulse, she flung herself at his feet, and clasping his knees, exclaimed in a wild and passionate tone, “Oh, dread and potent man! save him—save him! He is not guilty—it is I! He lies within, ill—dying,—and I—I am the hateful cause! And they will not admit me to him—they spurn the blind girl from the hall. Oh, heal him! thou knowest some herb—some spell—some counter-charm, for it is a potion that hath wrought this frenzy!”

“Hush, child! I know all!—thou forgettest that I

accompanied Julia to the Saga's home. Doubtless her hand administered the draught; but her reputation demands thy silence. Reproach not thyself—what must be, must: meanwhile, I seek the criminal—he may yet be saved. Away!”

Thus saying, Arbaces extricated himself from the clasp of the despairing Thessalian, and knocked loudly at the door.

In a few moments the heavy bars were heard suddenly to yield, and the porter, half opening the door, demanded who was there.

“Arbaces—important business to Sallust relative to Glaucus. I come from the prætor.”

The porter, half yawning, half groaning, admitted the tall form of the Egyptian. Nydia sprang forward. “How is he?” she cried; “tell me—tell me!”

“Ho, mad girl! is it thou still?—for shame! Why, they say he is sensible.”

“The gods be praised!—and you will not admit me? Ah! I beseech thee——”

“Admit thee!—no. A pretty salute I should prepare for these shoulders were I to admit such things as thou! Go home!”

The door closed, and Nydia, with a deep sigh, laid herself down once more on the cold stones; and, wrapping her cloak round her face, resumed her weary vigil.

Meanwhile Arbaces had already gained the triclinium, where Sallust, with his favourite freedman, sat late at supper.

“What ! Arbaces ! and at this hour !—Accept this cup.”

“Nay, gentle Sallust ; it is on business, not pleasure, that I venture to disturb thee. How doth thy charge ?—they say in the town that he has recovered sense.”

“Alas ! and truly,” replied the good-natured but thoughtless Sallust, wiping the tear from his eyes ; “but so shattered are his nerves and frame that I scarcely recognise the brilliant and gay carouser I was wont to know. Yet, strange to say, he cannot account for the cause of the sudden frenzy that seized him—he retains but a dim consciousness of what hath passed ; and, despite thy witness, wise Egyptian, solemnly upholds his innocence of the death of Apæcides.”

“Sallust,” said Arbaces, gravely, “there is much in thy friend’s case that merits a peculiar indulgence ; and could we learn from his lips the confession and the cause of his crime, much might be yet hoped from the mercy of the senate ; for the senate, thou knowest, hath the power either to mitigate or to sharpen the law. Therefore it is that I have conferred with the highest authority of the city, and obtained his permission to hold a private conference this night with the Athenian. To-morrow, thou knowest, the trial comes on.”

“Well,” said Sallust, “thou wilt be worthy of thy Eastern name and fame if thou canst learn aught from him ; but thou mayst try. Poor Glaucus !—and he had such an excellent appetite ! He eats nothing now !”

The benevolent epicure was moved sensibly at this thought. He sighed, and ordered his slaves to refill his cup.

"Night wanes," said the Egyptian; "suffer me to see thy ward now."

Sallust nodded assent, and led the way to a small chamber, guarded without by two dozing slaves. The door opened; at the request of Arbaces, Sallust withdrew—the Egyptian was alone with Glaucus.

One of those tall and graceful candelabra common to that day, supporting a single lamp, burned beside the narrow bed. Its rays fell palely over the face of the Athenian, and Arbaces was moved to see how sensibly that countenance had changed. The rich colour was gone, the cheek was sunk, the lips were convulsed and pallid; fierce had been the struggle between reason and madness, life and death. The youth, the strength of Glaucus had conquered; but the freshness of blood and soul—the life of life, its glory and its zest, were gone for ever.

The Egyptian seated himself quietly beside the bed; Glaucus still lay mute and unconscious of his presence. At length, after a considerable pause, Arbaces thus spoke:—

"Glaucus, we have been enemies. I come to thee alone, and in the dead of night—thy friend, perhaps thy saviour."

As the steed starts from the path of the tiger, Glaucus sprang up breathless—alarmed—panting at the abrupt

voice, the sudden apparition of his foe. Their eyes met, and neither, for some moments, had power to withdraw his gaze. The flush went and came over the face of the Athenian, and the bronzed cheek of the Egyptian grew a shade more pale. At length, with an inward groan, Glaucus turned away, drew his hand across his brow, sank back, and muttered—

“Am I still dreaming?”

“No, Glaucus, thou art awake. By this right hand and my father’s head, thou seest one who may save thy life. Hark! I know what thou hast done, but I know also its excuse, of which thou thyself art ignorant. Thou hast committed murder, it is true—a sacrilegious murder: frown not—start not—these eyes saw it. But I can save thee—I can prove how thou wert bereaved of sense, and made not a free-thinking and free-acting man. But in order to save thee, thou must confess thy crime. Sign but this paper, acknowledging thy hand in the death of Apæcides, and thou shalt avoid the fatal urn.”

“What words are these?—Murder and Apæcides!—Did I not see him stretched on the ground bleeding and a corpse? and wouldst thou persuade me that *I* did the deed? Man, thou liest! Away!”

“Be not rash—Glaucus, be not hasty; the deed is proved. Come, come, thou mayest well be excused for not recalling the act of thy delirium, and which thy sober senses would have shunned even to contemplate. But let me try to refresh thy exhausted and weary memory. Thou knowest thou wert walking with the

priest disputing about his sister; thou knowest he was intolerant, and half a Nazarene, and he sought to convert thee, and ye had hot words; and he calumniated thy mode of life, and swore he would not marry Ione to thee—and then, in thy wrath and thy frenzy, thou didst strike the sudden blow. Come, come; you can recollect this!—read this papyrus, it runs to that effect—sign it, and thou art saved.”

“Barbarian, give me the written lie, that I may tear it! *I* the murderer of Ione’s brother! *I* confess to have injured one hair of the head of him she loved! Let me rather perish a thousand times!”

“Beware!” said Arbaces, in a low and hissing tone; “there is but one choice—thy confession and thy signature, or the amphitheatre and the lion’s maw!”

As the Egyptian fixed his eyes upon the sufferer, he hailed with joy the signs of evident emotion that seized the latter at these words. A slight shudder passed over the Athenian’s frame—his lip fell—an expression of sudden fear and wonder betrayed itself in his brow and eye.

“Great gods,” he said, in a low voice, “what reverse is this? It seems but a little day since life laughed out from amidst roses—Ione mine—youth, health, love, lavishing on me their treasures; and now—pain, madness, shame, death! And for what? what have I done? O, I am mad still!”

“Sign and be saved!” said the soft, sweet voice of the Egyptian.

“Tempter, never!” cried Glaucus, in the reaction of

rage. "Thou knowest me not : thou knowest not the haughty soul of an Athenian ! The sudden face of death might appal me for a moment, but the fear is over. Dishonour appals for ever ! Who will debase his name to save his life ? who exchange clear thoughts for sullen days ? who will belie himself to shame, and stand blackened in the eyes of glory and of love ? If to earn a few years of polluted life there be so base a coward, dream not, dull barbarian of Egypt ! to find him in one who has trod the same sod as Harmodius, and breathed the same air as Socrates. Go ! leave me to live without self-reproach—or to perish without fear !"

"Bethink thee well ! the lion's fangs : the hoots of the brutal mob : the vulgar gaze on thy dying agony and mutilated limbs ; thy name degraded ; thy corpse unburied ; the shame thou wouldst avoid clinging to thee for aye and ever !"

"Thou ravest ! *thou* art the madman ! shame is not in the loss of other men's esteem—it is in the loss of our own. Wilt thou go ?—my eyes loathe the sight of thee ! hating ever, I despise thee now !"

"I go," said Arbaces, stung and exasperated, but not without some pitying admiration of his victim—"I go ; we meet twice again—once at the Trial, once at the Death ! Farewell !"

The Egyptian rose slowly, gathered his robes about him, and left the chamber. He sought Sallust for a moment, whose eyes began to reel with the vigils of the cup : "He is still unconscious, or still obstinate ; there is no hope for him."

"Say not so," replied Sallust, who felt but little resentment against the Athenian's accuser, for he possessed no great austerity of virtue, and was rather moved by his friend's reverses than persuaded of his innocence—"say not so, my Egyptian! so good a drinker shall be saved if possible. Bacchus against Isis!"

"We shall see," said the Egyptian.

Suddenly the bolts were again withdrawn—the door unclosed; Arbaces was in the open street; and poor Nydia once more started from her long watch.

"Wilt thou save him?" she cried, clasping her hands.

"Child, follow me home; I would speak to thee—it is for his sake I ask it."

"And thou wilt save him?"

No answer came forth to the thirsting ear of the blind girl: Arbaces had already proceeded far up the street; she hesitated a moment, and then followed his steps in silence.

"I must secure this girl," said he, musingly, "lest she give evidence of the philtre; as to the vain Julia, she will not betray herself."

CHAPTER VIII.

A Classic Funeral.

WHILE Arbaces had been thus employed, Sorrow and Death were in the house of Ione. It was the night preceding the morn in which the solemn funeral-rites were to be decreed to the remains of the murdered Apæcides. The corpse had been removed from the temple of Isis to the house of the nearest surviving relative, and Ione had heard, in the same breath, the death of her brother and the accusation against her betrothed. That first violent anguish which blunts the sense to all but itself, and the forbearing silence of her slaves, had prevented her learning minutely the circumstances attendant on the fate of her lover. His illness, his frenzy, and his approaching trial, were unknown to her. She learned only the accusation against him, and at once indignantly rejected it; nay, on hearing that Arbaces was the accuser, she required no more to induce her firmly and solemnly to believe that the Egyptian himself was the criminal. But the vast and absorbing importance attached by the ancients to the performance of every ceremonial connected with the death of a relation, had, as yet, confined her woe

and her convictions to the chamber of the deceased. Alas ! it was not for her to perform that tender and touching office, which obliged the nearest relative to endeavour to catch the last breath—the parting soul—of the beloved one : but it was hers to close the straining eyes, the distorted lips ; to watch by the consecrated clay, as, fresh bathed and anointed, it lay in festive robes upon the ivory bed ; to strew the couch with leaves and flowers, and to renew the solemn cypress-branch at the threshold of the door. And in these sad offices, in lamentation and in prayer, Ione forgot herself. It was among the loveliest customs of the ancients to bury the young at the morning twilight ; for, as they strove to give the softest interpretation to death, so they poetically imagined that Aurora, who loved the young, had stolen them to her embrace ; and though in the instance of the murdered priest this fable could not appropriately cheat the fancy, the general custom was still preserved.*

The stars were fading one by one from the grey heavens, and night slowly receding before the approach of morn, when a dark group stood motionless before Ione's door. High and slender torches, made paler by the unmellowed dawn, cast their light over various countenances, hushed for the moment in one solemn and intent expression. And now there arose a slow and dismal music, which accorded sadly with the rite,

* This was rather a Greek than a Roman custom ; but the reader will observe that in the cities of *Magna Græcia* the Greek customs and superstitions were much mingled with the Roman.

and floated far along the desolate and breathless streets; while a chorus of female voices (the *Præficæ* so often cited by the Roman poets), accompanying the Tibicen and the Mysian flute, woke the following strain:—

THE FUNERAL DIRGE.

“ O’er the sad threshold, where the cypress bough
 Supplants the rose that should adorn thy home,
 On the last pilgrimage on earth that now
 Awaits thee, wanderer to Cocytus, come!
 Darkly we woo, and weeping we invite—
 Death is thy host—his banquet asks thy soul;
 Thy garlands hang within the House of Night,
 And the black stream alone shall fill thy bowl.

No more for thee the laughter and the song,
 The jocund night—the glory of the day!
 The Argive daughters * at their labours long;
 The hell-bird swooping on its Titan prey—
 The false *Æolides*, † upheaving slow,
 O’er the eternal hill, the eternal stone;
 The crownèd Lydian, ‡ in his parching woe,
 And green *Callirrhœ*’s monster-headed son, §—

These shalt thou see, dim shadowed through the dark,
 Which makes the sky of Pluto’s dreary shore;
 Lo! where thou stand’st, pale gazing on the bark,
 That waits our rite || to bear thee trembling o’er!
 Come, then! no more delay!—the phantom pines
 Amidst the Unburied for its latest home;
 O’er the grey sky the torch impatient shines—
 Come, mourner, forth!—the lost one bids thee come!”

As the hymn died away, the group parted in twain;
 and placed upon a couch, spread with a purple pall,

* The *Danaïdes*. † *Sisyphus*. ‡ *Tantalus*. § *Geryon*.

|| The most idle novel-reader need scarcely be reminded, that not till after the funeral rites were the dead carried over the *Styx*.

the corpse of Apæcides was carried forth, with the feet foremost. The designator, or marshal of the sombre ceremonial, accompanied by his torch-bearers, clad in black, gave the signal, and the procession moved dreadfully on.

First went the musicians, playing a slow march—the solemnity of the lower instruments broken by many a louder and wilder burst of the funeral trumpet : next followed the hired mourners, chanting their dirges to the dead ; and the female voices were mingled with those of boys, whose tender years made still more striking the contrast of life and death—the fresh leaf and the withered one. But the players, the buffoons, the archimimus (whose duty it was to personate the dead) — these, the customary attendants at ordinary funerals, were banished from a funeral attended with so many terrible associations.

The priests of Isis came next in their snowy garments, barefooted, and supporting sheaves of corn ; while before the corpse were carried the images of the deceased, and his many Athenian forefathers. And behind the bier followed, amidst her women, the sole surviving relative of the dead—her head bare, her locks dishevelled, her face paler than marble, but composed and still, save ever and anon, as some tender thought, awakened by the music, flashed upon the dark lethargy of woe, she covered that countenance with her hands, and sobbed unseen : for hers were not the noisy sorrow, the shrill lament, the ungoverned gesture, which characterised those who honoured less

faithfully. In that age, as in all, the channel of deep grief flowed hushed and still.

And so the procession swept on, till it had traversed the streets, passed the city gate, and gained the Place of Tombs without the wall, which the traveller yet beholds.

Raised in the form of an altar—of unpolished pine, amidst whose interstices were placed preparations of combustible matter—stood the funeral pyre; and around it drooped the dark and gloomy cypresses so consecrated by song to the tomb.

As soon as the bier was placed upon the pile, the attendants parting on either side, Ione passed up to the couch, and stood before the unconscious clay for some moments motionless and silent. The features of the dead had been composed from the first agonised expression of violent death. Hushed for ever the terror and the doubt, the contest of passion, the awe of religion, the struggle of the past and present, the hope and the horror of the future!—of all that racked and desolated the breast of that young aspirant to the Holy of Life, what trace was visible in the awful serenity of that impenetrable brow and unbreathing lip? The sister gazed, and not a sound was heard amidst the crowd; there was something terrible, yet softening, also, in the silence; and when it broke, it broke sudden and abrupt—it broke with a loud and passionate cry—the vent of long-smothered despair.

“My brother! my brother!” cried the poor orphan, falling upon the couch; “thou whom the worm on

thy path feared not—what enemy couldst thou provoke? Oh, is it in truth come to this? Awake! awake! We grew together! Are we thus torn asunder? Thou art not dead—thou sleepest. Awake! awake!”

The sound of her piercing voice aroused the sympathy of the mourners, and they broke into loud and rude lament. This startled, this recalled Ione; she looked up hastily and confusedly, as if for the first time sensible of the presence of those around.

“*Ah!*” she murmured with a shiver, “*we are not then alone!*”

With that, after a brief pause, she rose: and her pale and beautiful countenance was again composed and rigid. With fond and trembling hands, she unclosed the lids of the deceased;* but when the dull glazed eye, no longer beaming with love and life, met hers, she shrieked aloud, as if she had seen a spectre. Once more recovering herself, she kissed again and again the lids, the lips, the brow; and with mechanic and unconscious hand, received from the high-priest of her brother’s temple the funeral torch.

The sudden burst of music, the sudden song of the mourners, announced the birth of the sanctifying flame.

HYMN TO THE WIND.

I.

“On thy couch of cloud reclined,
Wake, O soft and sacred Wind!
Soft and sacred will we name thee,
Whosoe’er the sire that claim thee,—

* Pliny, ii. 37.

Whether old Auster's dusky child,
 Or the loud son of Eurus wild ;
 Or his * who o'er the darkling deeps,
 From the bleak North, in tempest sweeps,
 Still shalt thou seem as dear to us
 As flowery-crown'd Zephyrus,
 When, through twilight's starry dew,
 Trembling, he hastes his nymph † to woo.

II.

Lo ! our silver censers swinging,
 Perfumes o'er thy path are flinging,—
 Ne'er o'er Tempe's breathless valleys,
 Ne'er o'er Cypria's cedarn alleys,
 Or the Rose-isle's ‡ moonlit sea,
 Floated sweets more worthy thee.
 Lo ! around our vases sending
 Myrrh and nard with cassia blending ;
 Paving air with odours meet,
 For thy silver-sandalled feet !

III.

August and everlasting air !
 The source of all that breathe and be,
 From the mute clay before thee bear
 The seeds it took from thee !
 Aspire, bright Flame ! aspire !
 Wild wind !—awake, awake !
 Thine own, O solemn Fire !
 O Air, thine own retake !

IV.

It comes ! it comes ! Lo ! it sweeps,
 The Wind we invoke the while !
 And crackles, and darts, and leaps
 The light on the holy pile !
 It rises ! its wings interweave
 With the flames,—how they howl and heave !
 Tossed, whirled to and fro,
 How the flame-serpents glow !

* Boreas.

† Flora.

‡ Rhodes.

Rushing higher and higher,
On—on, fearful Fire !
Thy giant limbs twined
With the arms of the Wind !
Lo ! the elements meet on the throne
Of death—to reclaim their own !

V.

Swing, swing the censer round—
Tune the strings to a softer sound !
From the chains of thy earthly toil,
From the clasp of thy mortal coil,
From the prison where clay confined thee,
The hands of the flame unbind thee !
O Soul ! thou art free—all free !

As the winds in their ceaseless chase,
When they rush o'er their airy sea,
Thou may'st speed through the realms of space,
No fetter is forged for thee !
Rejoice ! o'er the sluggish tide
Of the Styx thy bark can glide,
And thy steps evermore shall rove
Through the glades of the happy grove ;
Where, far from the loathed Cocytus,
The loved and the lost invite us.
Thou art slave to the earth no more !
O soul, thou art freed !—and we ?—
Ah ! when shall our toil be o'er ?
Ah ! when shall we rest with thee ?”

And now high and far into the dawning skies broke the fragrant fire ; it flashed luminously across the gloomy cypresses—it shot above the massive walls of the neighbouring city ; and the early fishermen started to behold the blaze reddening on the waves of the creeping sea.

But Ione sat down apart and alone, and, leaning her face upon her hands, saw not the flame, nor heard the

lamentation of the music : she felt only one sense of loneliness,—she had not yet arrived to that hallowing sense of comfort, when we know that we are *not* alone—that the dead are with us !

The breeze rapidly aided the effect of the combustibles placed within the pile. By degrees the flame wavered, lowered, dimmed, and slowly, by fits and unequal starts, died away—emblem of life itself ; where, just before, all was restlessness and flame, now lay the dull and smouldering ashes.

The last sparks were extinguished by the attendants—the embers were collected. Steeped in the rarest wine and the costliest odours, the remains were placed in a silver urn, which was solemnly stored in one of the neighbouring sepulchres beside the road ; and they placed within it the vial full of tears, and the small coin which poetry still consecrated to the grim boatman. And the sepulchre was covered with flowers and chaplets, and the incense kindled on the altar, and the tomb hung round with many lamps.

But the next day, when the priest returned with fresh offerings to the tomb, he found that to the relics of heathen superstition some unknown hands had added a green palm-branch. He suffered it to remain, unknowing that it was the sepulchral emblem of Christianity.

When the above ceremonies were over, one of the *Præficæ* three times sprinkled the mourners from the purifying branch of laurel, uttering the last word, "*Ilicet !*"—Depart !—and the rite was done.

But first they paused to utter—weepingly and many times—the affecting farewell, “*Salve Eternum!*” And as Ione yet lingered, they woke the parting strain.

SALVE ETERNUM.

I.

“ Farewell ! O soul departed !
Farewell ! O sacred urn !
Bereaved and broken-hearted,
To earth the mourners turn !
To the dim and dreary shore,
Thou art gone our steps before !
But thither the swift Hours lead us,
And thou dost but a while precede us !
Salve—salve !
Loved urn, and thou solemn cell,
Mute ashes !—farewell, farewell !
Salve—salve !

II.

Ilicet—ire licet—
Ah, vainly would we part !
Thy tomb is the faithful heart.
About evermore we bear thee ;
For who from the heart can tear thee ?
Vainly we sprinkle o’er us
The drops of the cleansing stream ;
And vainly bright before us
The lustral fire shall beam.
For where is the charm expelling
Thy thought from its sacred dwelling ?
Our griefs are thy funeral feast,
And Memory thy mourning priest.
Salve—salve !

III.

Ilicet—ire licet !
The spark from the hearth is gone
Wherever the air shall bear it ;
The elements take their own—
The shadows receive thy spirit.

It will soothe thee to feel our grief.

As thou glid'st by the Gloomy River !

If love may in life be brief,

In death it is fixed for ever.

Salve—salve !

In the hall which our feasts illumine,

The rose for an hour may bloom ;

But the cypress that decks the tomb—

The cypress is green for ever !

Salve—salve !”

CHAPTER IX.

In which an Adventure happens to Ione.

WHILE some stayed behind to share with the priests the funeral banquet, Ione and her handmaids took homeward their melancholy way. And now—the last duties to her brother performed—her mind awoke from its absorption, and she thought of her affianced, and the dread charge against him. Not—as we have before said—attaching even a momentary belief to the unnatural accusation, but nursing the darkest suspicion against Arbaces, she felt that justice to her lover and to her murdered relative demanded her to seek the prætor, and communicate her impression, unsupported as it might be. Questioning her maidens, who had hitherto—kindly anxious, as I have said, to save her the additional agony—refrained from informing her of the state of Glaucus, she learned that he had been dangerously ill; that he was in custody, under the roof of Sallust; that the day of his trial was appointed.

“Averting gods!” she exclaimed; “and have I been so long forgetful of him? Have I seemed to shun him? Oh! let me hasten to do him justice—to show

that I, the nearest relative of the dead, believe him innocent of the charge. Quick ! quick ! let us fly ! Let me soothe—tend—cheer him ! and if they will not believe me ; if they will not lead to my conviction ; if they sentence him to exile or to death, let me share the sentence with him !”

Instinctively she hastened her pace, confused and bewildered, scarce knowing whither she went ; now designing first to seek the prætor, and now to rush to the chamber of Glaucus. She hurried on—she passed the gate of the city—she was in the long street leading up the town. The houses were opened, but none were yet astir in the streets ; the life of the city was scarce awake—when lo ! she came suddenly upon a small knot of men standing beside a covered litter. A tall figure stepped from the midst of them, and Ione shrieked aloud to behold Arbaces.

“ Fair Ione !” said he, gently, and appearing not to heed her alarm : “ my ward, my pupil ! forgive me if I disturb thy pious sorrows ; but the prætor, solicitous of thy honour, and anxious that thou mayest not rashly be implicated in the coming trial ; knowing the strange embarrassment of thy state (seeking justice for thy brother, but dreading punishment to thy betrothed)—sympathising, too, with thy unprotected and friendless condition, and deeming it harsh that thou shouldst be suffered to act unguided and mourn alone—hath wisely and paternally confided thee to the care of thy lawful guardian. Behold the writing which intrusts thee to my charge !”

“Dark Egyptian!” cried Ione, drawing herself proudly aside; “begone! It is thou that hast slain my brother! Is it to thy care, thy hands yet reeking with his blood, that they will give the sister? Ha! thou turnest pale! thy conscience smites thee! thou tremblest at the thunderbolt of the avenging god! Pass on, and leave me to my woe!”

“Thy sorrows unstring thy reason, Ione,” said Arbaces, attempting in vain his usual calmness of tone. “I forgive thee. Thou wilt find me now, as ever, thy surest friend. But the public streets are not the fitting place for us to confer—for me to console thee. Approach, slaves! Come, my sweet charge, the litter awaits thee.”

The amazed and terrified attendants gathered round Ione, and clung to her knees.

“Arbaces,” said the eldest of the maidens, “this is surely not the law! For nine days after the funeral, is it not written that the relatives of the deceased shall not be molested in their homes, or interrupted in their solitary grief?”

“Woman!” returned Arbaces, imperiously waving his hand, “to place a ward under the roof of her guardian is not against the funeral laws. I tell thee I have the fiat of the prætor. This delay is indecorous. Place her in the litter.”

So saying he threw his arm firmly round the shrinking form of Ione. She drew back, gazed earnestly in his face, and then burst into hysterical laughter:—

“Ha! ha! this is well—well! Excellent guardian

—paternal law! Ha! ha!” And, startled herself at the dread echo of that shrill and maddened laughter, she sunk, as it died away, lifeless upon the ground. A minute more, and Arbaces had lifted her into the litter. The bearers moved swiftly on, and the unfortunate Ione was soon borne from the sight of her weeping handmaids.

CHAPTER X.

What becomes of Nydia in the House of Arbaces—the Egyptian feels Compassion for Glaucus—Compassion is often a very useless visitor to the Guilty.

It will be remembered that, at the command of Arbaces, Nydia followed the Egyptian to his home, and conversing there with her, he learned from the confession of her despair and remorse, that her hand, and not Julia's, had administered to Glaucus the fatal potion. At another time the Egyptian might have conceived a philosophical interest in sounding the depths and origin of the strange and absorbing passion which, in blindness and in slavery, this singular girl had dared to cherish; but at present he spared no thought from himself. As, after her confession, the poor Nydia threw herself on her knees before him, and besought him to restore the health and save the life of Glaucus—for in her youth and ignorance she imagined the dark magician all-powerful to effect both—Arbaces, with unheeding ears, was noting only the new expediency of detaining Nydia a prisoner until the trial and fate of Glaucus were decided. For if, when he judged her merely the accomplice of Julia in obtaining the philtre, he had felt it was dangerous to the full success

of his vengeance to allow her to be at large—to appear, perhaps, as a witness—to avow the manner in which the sense of Glaucus had been darkened, and thus win indulgence to the crime of which he was accused—how much more was she likely to volunteer her testimony when she herself had administered the draught, and, inspired by love, would be only anxious, at any expense of shame, to retrieve her error and preserve her beloved? Besides, how unworthy of the rank and repute of Arbaces to be implicated in the disgrace of pandering to the passion of Julia, and assisting in the unholy rites of the Saga of Vesuvius! Nothing less, indeed, than his desire to induce Glaucus to own the murder of Apæcides, as a policy evidently the best both for his own permanent safety and his successful suit with Ione, could ever have led him to contemplate the confession of Julia.

As for Nydia, who was necessarily cut off by her blindness from much of the knowledge of active life, and who, a slave and a stranger, was naturally ignorant of the perils of the Roman law, she thought rather of the illness and delirium of her Athenian, than the crime of which she had vaguely heard him accused, or the chances of the impending trial. Poor wretch that she was, whom none addressed, none cared for, what did she know of the senate and the sentence—the hazard of the law—the ferocity of the people—the arena and the lion's den? She was accustomed only to associate with the thought of Glaucus everything that was prosperous and lofty—she could not

imagine that any peril, save from the madness of her love, could menace that sacred head. He seemed to her set apart for the blessings of life. *She* only had disturbed the current of his felicity; she knew not, she dreamed not, that the stream, once so bright, was dashing on to darkness and to death. It was therefore to restore the brain that *she* had marred, to save the life that *she* had endangered, that she implored the assistance of the great Egyptian.

“Daughter,” said Arbaces, waking from his reverie, “thou must rest here; it is not meet for thee to wander along the streets, and be spurned from the threshold by the rude feet of slaves. I have compassion on thy soft crime—I will do all to remedy it. Wait here patiently for some days, and Glaucus shall be restored.” So saying, and without waiting for her reply, he hastened from the room, drew the bolt across the door, and consigned the care and wants of his prisoner to the slave who had the charge of that part of the mansion.

Alone, then, and musingly, he waited the morning light, and with it repaired, as we have seen, to possess himself of the person of Ione.

His primary object, with respect to the unfortunate Neapolitan, was that which he had really stated to Clodius—viz., to prevent her interesting herself actively in the trial of Glaucus, and also to guard against her accusing him (which she would doubtless have done) of his former act of perfidy and violence towards her, his ward—denouncing his causes for vengeance against

Glaucus—unveiling the hypocrisy of his character—and casting any doubt upon his veracity in the charge which he had made against the Athenian. Not till he had encountered her that morning—not till he had heard her loud denunciations—was he aware that he had also another danger to apprehend in her suspicion of his crime. He hugged himself now in the thought that these ends were effected; that one, at once the object of his passion and his fear, was in his power. He believed more than ever the flattering promises of the stars; and when he sought Ione in that chamber in the inmost recesses of his mysterious mansion to which he had consigned her—when he found her overpowered by blow upon blow, and passing from fit to fit, from violence to torpor, in all the alternations of hysterical disease—he thought more of the loveliness which no frenzy could distort, than of the woe which he had brought upon her. In that sanguine vanity common to men who through life have been invariably successful whether in fortune or love, he flattered himself that when Glaucus had perished—when his name was solemnly blackened by the award of a legal judgment, his title to her love for ever forfeited by condemnation to death for the murder of her own brother—her affection would be changed to horror; and that his tenderness and his passion, assisted by all the arts with which he well knew how to dazzle woman's imagination, might elect him to that throne in her heart from which his rival would be so awfully expelled. This was his hope: but should it fail, his

unholy and fervid passion whispered, "At the worst, *now* she is in my power."

Yet, withal, he felt that uneasiness and apprehension which attend upon the chance of detection, even when the criminal is insensible to the voice of conscience—that vague terror of the consequences of crime, which is often mistaken for remorse at the crime itself. The buoyant air of Campania weighed heavily upon his breast; he longed to hurry from a scene where danger might not sleep eternally with the dead; and, having Ione now in his possession, he secretly resolved, as soon as he had witnessed the last agony of his rival, to transport his wealth—and her, the costliest treasure of all, to some distant shore.

"Yes," said he, striding to and fro his solitary chamber—"yes, the law that gave me the person of my ward gives me the possession of my bride. Far across the broad main will we sweep on our search after novel luxuries and inexperienced pleasures. Cheered by my stars, supported by the omens of my soul, we will penetrate to those vast and glorious worlds which my wisdom tells me lie yet untracked in the recesses of the circling sea. There may this heart, possessed of love, grow once more alive to ambition—there, amongst nations uncrushed by the Roman yoke, and to whose ear the name of Rome has not yet been wafted, I may found an empire, and transplant my ancestral creed; renewing the ashes of the dead Theban rule: continuing in yet grander shores the dynasty of my crowned fathers, and waking

in the noble heart of Ione the grateful consciousness that she shares the lot of one who, far from the aged rottenness of this slavish civilisation, restores the primal elements of greatness, and unites in one mighty soul the attributes of the prophet and the king."

From this exultant soliloquy, Arbaces was awakened to attend the trial of the Athenian.

The worn and pallid cheek of his victim touched him less than the firmness of his nerves and the dauntlessness of his brow; for Arbaces was one who had little pity for what was unfortunate, but a strong sympathy for what was bold. The congenialities that bind us to others ever assimilate to the qualities of our own nature. The hero weeps less at the reverses of his enemy than at the fortitude with which he bears them. All of us are human, and Arbaces, criminal as he was, had his share of our common feelings and our mother-clay. Had he but obtained from Glaucus the written confession of his crime, which would, better than even the judgment of others, have lost him with Ione, and removed from Arbaces the chance of future detection, the Egyptian would have strained every nerve to save his rival. Even now his hatred was over—his desire of revenge was slaked; he crushed his prey, not in enmity, but as an obstacle in his path. Yet was he not the less resolved, the less crafty and persevering, in the course he pursued, for the destruction of one whose doom was become necessary to the attainment of his objects; and while, with apparent reluctance and compassion, he gave against Glaucus the evidence

which condemned him, he secretly, and through the medium of the priesthood, fomented that popular indignation which made an effectual obstacle to the pity of the senate. He had sought Julia; he had detailed to her the confession of Nydia; he had easily, therefore, lulled any scruple of conscience which might have led her to extenuate the offence of Glaucus by avowing her share in his frenzy: and the more readily, for her vain heart had loved the fame and the prosperity of Glaucus—not Glaucus himself; she felt no affection for a disgraced man—nay, she almost rejoiced in a disgrace that humbled the hated Ione. If Glaucus could not be her slave, neither could he be the adorer of her rival. This was sufficient consolation for any regret at his fate. Volatile and fickle, she began again to be moved by the sudden and earnest suit of Clodius, and was not willing to hazard the loss of an alliance with that base but high-born noble by any public exposure of her past weakness and immodest passion for another. All things then smiled upon Arbaces—all things frowned upon the Athenian.

CHAPTER XI.

Nydia affects the Sorceress.

WHEN the Thessalian found that Arbaces returned to her no more—when she was left, hour after hour, to all the torture of that miserable suspense which was rendered by blindness doubly intolerable, she began, with outstretched arms, to feel around her prison for some channel of escape; and finding the only entrance secure, she called aloud, and with the vehemence of a temper naturally violent, and now sharpened by impatient agony.

“Ho, girl!” said the slave in attendance, opening the door; “art thou bit by a scorpion? or thinkest thou that we are dying of silence here, and only to be preserved, like the infant Jupiter, by a hullabaloo?”

“Where is thy master? and wherefore am I caged here? I want air and liberty: let me go forth!”

“Alas! little one, hast thou not seen enough of Arbaces to know that his will is imperial? He hath ordered thee to be caged; and caged thou art, and I am thy keeper. Thou canst not have air and liberty; but thou mayest have what are much better things—food and wine.”

“Proh Jupiter!” cried the girl, wringing her hands;

“and why am I thus imprisoned? What can the great Arbaees want with so poor a thing as I am?”

“That I know not, unless it be to attend on thy new mistress, who has been brought hither this day.”

“What! Ione here?”

“Yes, poor lady; she liked it little, I fear. Yet, by the Temple of Castor! Arbaees is a gallant man to the women. Thy lady is his ward, thou knowest.”

“Wilt thou take me to her?”

“She is ill—frantic with rage and spite. Besides, I have no orders to do so; and I never think for myself. When Arbaees made me slave of these chambers,* he said, ‘I have but one lesson to give thee: while thou servest me, thou must have neither ears, eyes, nor thought; thou must be but one quality—obedience.’”

“But what harm is there in seeing Ione?”

“That I know not; but if thou wantest a companion, I am willing to talk to thee, little one, for I am solitary enough in my dull cubiculum. And, by the way, thou art Thessalian—knowest thou not some cunning amusement of knife and shears, some pretty trick of telling fortunes, as most of thy race do, in order to pass the time?”

“Tush, slave, hold thy peace: or, if thou wilt speak, what hast thou heard of the state of Glaucus?”

“Why, my master has gone to the Athenian’s trial; Glaucus will smart for it!”

* In the houses of the great, each suite of chambers had its peculiar slave.

“For what?”

“The murder of the priest Apæcides.”

“Ha!” said Nydia, pressing her hands to her forehead; “something of this I have indeed heard, but understand not. Yet, who will dare to touch a hair of his head?”

“That will the lion, I fear.”

“Averting gods! what wickedness dost thou utter?”

“Why, only that, if he be found guilty, the lion, or maybe the tiger, will be his executioner.”

Nydia leaped up, as if an arrow had entered her heart; she uttered a piercing scream; then, falling before the feet of the slave, she cried, in a tone that melted even his rude heart—

“Ah! tell me thou jestest—thou utterest not the truth—speak, speak!”

“Why, by my faith, blind girl, I know nothing of the law; it may not be so bad as I say. But Arbaces is his accuser, and the people desire a victim for the arena. Cheer thee! But what hath the fate of the Athenian to do with thine?”

“No matter, no matter—he has been kind to me: thou knowest not, then, what they will do? Arbaces his accuser! O fate! The people—the people! Ah! *they* can look upon his face—who will be cruel to the Athenian!—Yet was not Love itself cruel to him?”

So saying, her head drooped upon her bosom: she sank into silence; scalding tears flowed down her cheeks; and all the kindly efforts of the slave were unable either to console her or distract the absorption of her reverie.

When his household cares obliged the ministrant to leave her room, Nydia began to re-collect her thoughts. Arbaces was the accuser of Glaucus; Arbaces had imprisoned her here: was not that a proof that her liberty might be servicable to Glaucus? Yes, she was evidently inveigled into some snare; she was contributing to the destruction of her beloved! Oh, how she panted for release! Fortunately for her sufferings, all sense of pain became merged in the desire of escape; and as she began to revolve the possibility of deliverance, she grew calm and thoughtful. She possessed much of the craft of her sex, and it had been increased in her breast by her early servitude. What slave was ever destitute of cunning? She resolved to practise upon her keeper; and, calling suddenly to mind his superstitious query as to her Thessalian art, she hoped by that handle to work out some method of release. These doubts occupied her mind during the rest of the day and the long hours of night; and, accordingly, when Sosia visited her the following morning, she hastened to divert his garrulity into that channel in which it had before evinced a natural disposition to flow.

She was aware, however, that her only chance of escape was at night; and accordingly she was obliged, with a bitter pang at the delay, to defer till then her purposed attempt.

"The night," said she, "is the sole time in which we can well decipher the decrees of fate—then it is thou must seek me. But what desirest thou to learn?"

"By Pollux ! I should like to know as much as my master ; but that is not to be expected. Let me know, at least, whether I shall save enough to purchase my freedom, or whether this Egyptian will give it me for nothing. He does such generous things sometimes. Next, supposing that be true, shall I possess myself of that snug taberna among the Myropolia* which I have long had in my eye ? 'Tis a genteel trade that of a perfumer, and suits a retired slave who has something of a gentleman about him !"

"Ay ! so you would have precise answers to those questions ?—there are various ways of satisfying you. There is the Lithomanteia, or Speaking-stone, which answers your prayer with an infant's voice ; but, then, we have not that precious stone with us—costly is it and rare. Then there is the Gastromanteia, whereby the demon casts pale and deadly images upon water, prophetic of the future. But this art requires also glasses of a peculiar fashion, to contain the consecrated liquid, which we have not. I think, therefore, that the simplest method of satisfying your desire would be by the Magic of Air."

"I trust," said Sosia, tremulously, "that there is nothing very frightful in the operation ? I have no love for apparitions."

"Fear not ; thou wilt see nothing ; thou wilt only hear by the bubbling of water whether or not thy suit prospers. First, then, be sure, from the rising of the evening star, that thou leavest the garden-gate some-

* The shops of the perfumers.

what open, so that the demon may feel himself invited to enter therein ; and place fruits and water near the gate as a sign of hospitality ; then, three hours after twilight, come here with a bowl of the coldest and purest water, and thou shalt learn all, according to the Thessalian lore my mother taught me. But forget not the garden-gate—all rests upon that : it must be open when you come, and for three hours previously.”

“Trust me,” replied the unsuspecting Sosia ; “I know what a gentleman’s feelings are when a door is shut in his face, as the cookshop’s hath been in mine many a day ; and I know also, that a person of respectability, as a demon of course is, cannot but be pleased, on the other hand, with any little mark of courteous hospitality. Meanwhile, pretty one, here is thy morning’s meal.”

“And what of the trial?”

“Oh, the lawyers are still at it—talk, talk—it will last over till to-morrow.”

“To-morrow?—you are sure of that?”

“So I hear.”

“And Ione?”

“By Bacchus ! she must be tolerably well, for she was strong enough to make my master stamp and bite his lip this morning. I saw him quit her apartment with a brow like a thunderstorm.”

“Lodges she near this?”

“No—in the upper apartments. But I must not stay prating here longer.—*Vale !*”

CHAPTER XII.

A Wasp ventures into the Spider's Web.

THE second night of the trial had set in ; and it was nearly the time in which Sosia was to brave the dread Unknown, when there entered, at that very garden-gate which the slave had left ajar—not, indeed, one of the mysterious spirits of earth or air, but the heavy and most human form of Calenus, the priest of Isis. He scarcely noted the humble offerings of indifferent fruit, and still more indifferent wine, which the pious Sosia had deemed good enough for the invisible stranger they were intended to allure. “Some tribute,” thought he, “to the garden god. By my father’s head ! if his deityship were never better served, he would do well to give up the godly profession. Ah ! were it not for us priests, the gods would have a sad time of it. And now for Arbaces—I am treading a quicksand, but it ought to cover a mine. I have the Egyptian’s life in my power—what will he value it at ?”

As he thus soliloquised, he crossed through the open court into the peristyle, where a few lamps here and there broke upon the empire of the starlit night ; and, issuing from one of the chambers that bordered the colonnade, suddenly encountered Arbaces.

“Ho ! Calenus—seekest thou me ?” said the Egyptian ; and there was a little embarrassment in his voice.

“Yes, wise Arbaces—I trust my visit is not unreasonable ?”

“Nay—it was but this instant that my freedman Callias sneezed thrice at my right hand ; I knew, therefore, some good fortune was in store for me—and, lo ! the gods have sent me Calenus.”

“Shall we within to your chamber, Arbaces ?”

“As you will ; but the night is clear and balmy—I have some remains of languor yet lingering on me from my recent illness—the air refreshes me—let us walk in the garden—we are equally alone there.”

“With all my heart,” answered the priest ; and the two *friends* passed slowly to one of the many terraces which, bordered by marble vases and sleeping flowers, intersected the garden.

“It is a lovely night,” said Arbaces,—“blue and beautiful as that on which, twenty years ago, the shores of Italy first broke upon my view. My Calenus, age creeps upon us—let us, at least, feel that we have lived.”

“Thou, at least, mayest arrogate that boast,” said Calenus, beating about, as it were, for an opportunity to communicate the secret which weighed upon him, and feeling his usual awe of Arbaces still more impressively that night, from the quiet and friendly tone of dignified condescension which the Egyptian assumed—“thou, at least, mayest arrogate that boast. Thou hast had countless wealth—a frame on whose close-woven fibres disease can find no space to enter—prosperous

love—inexhaustible pleasure—and, even at this hour, triumphant revenge.”

“Thou alludest to the Athenian. Ay, to-morrow’s sun the fiat of his death will go forth. The senate does not relent. But thou mistakest : his death gives me no other gratification than that it releases me of a rival in the affections of Ione. I entertain no other sentiment of animosity against that unfortunate homicide.”

“Homicide !” repeated Calenus, slowly and meaningly ; and, halting as he spoke, he fixed his eyes upon Arbaces. The stars shone pale and steadily on the proud face of their prophet, but they betrayed there no change : the eyes of Calenus fell disappointed and abashed. He continued rapidly—“Homicide ! it is well to charge him with that crime ; but thou, of all men, knowest that he is innocent.”

“Explain thyself,” said Arbaces, coldly ; for he had prepared himself for the hint his secret fears had foretold.

“Arbaces,” answered Calenus, sinking his voice into a whisper, “I was in the sacred grove, sheltered by the chapel and the surrounding foliage. I overheard—I marked the whole. I saw thy weapon pierce the heart of Apæcides. I blame not the deed—it destroyed a foe and an apostate.”

“Thou sawest the whole !” said Arbaces, dryly : “so I imagined—thou wert alone ?”

“Alone !” returned Calenus, surprised at the Egyptian’s calmness.

“And wherefore wert thou hid behind the chapel at that hour?”

“Because I had learned the conversion of Apæcides to the Christian faith—because I knew that on that spot he was to meet the fierce Olinthus—because they were to meet there to discuss plans for unveiling the sacred mysteries of our goddess to the people—and I was there to detect, in order to defeat them.”

“Hast thou told living ear what thou didst witness?”

“No, my master; the secret is locked in thy servant’s breast.”

“What! even thy kinsman Burbo guesses it not? Come, the truth!”

“By the gods——”

“Hush! we know each other—what are the gods to us?”

“By the fear of thy vengeance, then—no!”

“And why hast thou hitherto concealed from me this secret? Why hast thou waited till the eve of the Athenian’s condemnation before thou hast ventured to tell me that Arbaces is a murderer? And, having tarried so long, why revealest thou now that knowledge?”

“Because—because——” stammered Calenus, colouring and in confusion.

“Because,” interrupted Arbaces, with a gentle smile, and tapping the priest on the shoulder with a kindly and familiar gesture—“because, my Calenus (see now, I will read thy heart, and explain its motives)—because thou didst wish thoroughly to commit and en-

tangle me in the trial, so that I might have no loophole of escape; that I might stand firmly pledged to perjury and to malice, as well as to homicide; that having myself whetted the appetite of the populace to blood, no wealth, no power, could prevent my becoming their victim; and thou tellest me thy secret now, ere the trial be over and the innocent condemned, to show what a desperate web of villany thy word to-morrow could destroy; to enhance in this, the ninth hour, the price of thy forbearance; to show that my own arts, in arousing the popular wrath, would, at thy witness, recoil upon myself; and that, if not for Glaucus, for *me* would gape the jaws of the lion! Is it not so?"

"Arbaces," replied Calenus, losing all the vulgar audacity of his natural character, "verily thou *art* a Magian; thou readest the heart as it were a scroll."

"It is my vocation," answered the Egyptian, laughing gently. "Well, then, forbear; and when all is over, I will make thee rich."

"Pardon me," said the priest, as the quick suggestion of that avarice, which was his master-passion, bade him trust no *future* chance of generosity; "pardon me; thou saidst right—we know each other. If thou wouldst have me silent, thou must pay something in advance, as an offer to Harpocrates.* If the rose, sweet emblem of discretion, is to take root firmly, water her this night with a stream of gold."

"Witty and poetical!" answered Arbaces, still in

* The god of Silence.

that bland voice which lulled and encouraged, when it ought to have alarmed and checked, his griping comrade. "Wilt thou not wait the morrow?"

"Why this delay? Perhaps, when I can no longer give my testimony without shame for not having given it ere the innocent man suffered, thou wilt forget my claim; and, indeed, thy present hesitation is a bad omen of thy future gratitude."

"Well, then, Calenus, what wouldst thou have me pay thee?"

"Thy life is very precious, and thy wealth is very great," returned the priest, grinning.

"Wittier and more witty. But speak out—what shall be the sum?"

"Arbaces, I have heard that in thy secret treasury below, beneath those rude Oscan arches which prop thy stately halls, thou hast piles of gold, of vases, and of jewels, which might rival the receptacles of the wealth of the deified Nero. Thou mayest easily spare out of those piles enough to make Calenus among the richest priests of Pompeii, and yet not miss the loss."

"Come, Calenus," said Arbaces, winningly, and with a frank and generous air, "thou art an old friend, and hast been a faithful servant. Thou canst have no wish to take away my life, nor I a desire to stint thy reward: thou shalt descend with me to that treasury thou referrest to, thou shalt feast thine eyes with the blaze of uncounted gold and the sparkle of priceless gems; and thou shalt, for thy own reward, bear away with thee this night as much as thou canst conceal

beneath thy robes. Nay, when thou hast once seen what thy friend possesses, thou wilt learn how foolish it would be to injure one who has so much to bestow. When Glaucus is no more, thou shalt pay the treasury another visit. Speak I frankly and as a friend?"

"Oh, greatest, best of men!" cried Calenus, almost weeping with joy, "canst thou thus forgive my injurious doubts of thy justice, thy generosity?"

"Hush! one other turn, and we will descend to the Oscan arches."

CHAPTER XIII.

The Slave consults the Oracle.—They who blind themselves the Blind may fool.—Two New Prisoners made in One Night.

IMPATIENTLY Nydia awaited the arrival of the no less anxious Sosia. Fortifying his courage by plentiful potations of a better liquor than that provided for the demon, the credulous ministrant stole into the blind girl's chamber.

"Well, Sosia, and art thou prepared? Hast thou the bowl of pure water?"

"Verily, yes : but I tremble a little. You are sure I shall not see the demon? I have heard that those gentlemen are by no means of a handsome person or a civil demeanour."

"Be assured ! And hast thou left the garden-gate gently open?"

"Yes ; and placed some beautiful nuts and apples on a table close by."

"That's well. And the gate is open now, so that the demon may pass through it?"

"Surely it is."

"Well, then, open this door ; there—leave it just ajar. And now, Sosia, give me the lamp."

“What! you will not extinguish it?”

“No; but I must breathe my spell over its ray.
There is a spirit in fire. Seat thyself.”

The slave obeyed; and Nydia, after bending for some moments silently over the lamp, rose, and in a low voice chanted the following rude

INVOCATION TO THE SPECTRE OF THE AIR.

“Loved alike by Air and Water
Aye must be Thessalia's daughter;
To us, Olympian hearts, are given
Spells that draw the moon from heaven.
All that Egypt's learning wrought—
All that Persia's Magian taught—
Won from song, or wrung from flowers,
Or whispered low by fiend—are ours.

Spectre of the viewless air,
Hear the blind Thessalian's prayer;
By Erictho's art, that shed
Dews of life when life was fled;
By lone Ithaca's wise king,
Who could wake the crystal spring
To the voice of prophecy;
By the lost Eurydice,
Summoned from the shadowy throng,
At the muse-son's magic song;
By the Colchian's awful charms,
When fair-haired Jason left her arms;—
Spectre of the airy halls,
One who owns thee duly calls!
Breathe along the brimming bowl,
And instruct the fearful soul
In the shadowy things that lie
Dark in dim futurity.
Come, wild demon of the air,
Answer to thy votary's prayer!
Come! oh, come!

And no god on heaven or earth—
Not the Paphian Queen of Mirth,
Nor the vivid Lord of Light,
Nor the triple Maid of Night,
Nor the Thunderer's self, shall be
Blest and honoured more than thee !
Come ! oh, come !

“The spectre *is* certainly coming,” said Sosia. “I feel him running along my hair !”

“Place thy bowl of water on the ground. Now, then, give me thy napkin, and let me fold up thy face and eyes.”

“Ay ! that's always the custom with these charms. Not so tight, though : gently—gently !”

“There—thou canst not see ?”

“See, by Jupiter ! No ! nothing but darkness.”

“Address, then, to the spectre whatever question thou wouldst ask him, in a low-whispered voice, three times. If thy question is answered in the affirmative, thou wilt hear the water ferment and bubble before the demon breathes upon it ; if in the negative, the water will be quite silent.”

“But you will not play any trick with the water, eh ?”

“Let me place the bowl under thy feet—so. Now thou wilt perceive that I cannot touch it without thy knowledge.”

“Very fair. Now, then, O Bacchus ! befriend me. Thou knowest that I have always loved thee better than all the other gods, and I will dedicate to thee that silver cup I stole last year from the burly carptor (butler), if thou wilt but befriend me with this water-

loving demon. And thou, O Spirit! listen and hear me. Shall I be enabled to purchase my freedom next year? Thou knowest: for, as thou livest in the air, the birds* have doubtless acquainted thee with every secret of this house,—thou knowest that I have filched and pilfered all that I honestly—that is, safely—could lay finger upon for the last three years, and I yet want two thousand sesterces of the full sum. Shall I be able, O good Spirit! to make up the deficiency in the course of this year? Speak—Ha! does the water bubble? No; all is still as a tomb.—Well, then, if not this year, in two years?—Ah! I hear something; the demon is scratching at the door; he'll be here presently.—In two years, my good fellow: come now, two; that's a very reasonable time. What! dumb still! Two years and a half—three—four? Ill fortune to you, friend demon! You are not a lady, that's clear, or you would not keep silence so long. Five—six—sixty years? and may Pluto seize you! I'll ask no more." And Sosia, in a rage, kicked down the water over his legs. He then, after much fumbling, and more cursing, managed to extricate his head from the napkin in which it was completely folded—stared round—and discovered that he was in the dark.

"What, ho, Nydia! the lamp is gone. Ah, traitress! and thou art gone, too; but I'll catch thee—thou shalt smart for this!"

* Who are supposed to know all secrets. The same superstition prevails in the East, and is not without example also in our northern legends.

The slave groped his way to the door; it was bolted from without: he was a prisoner instead of Nydia. What could he do? He did not dare to knock loud—to call out—lest Arbaces should overhear him, and discover how he had been duped; and Nydia, meanwhile, had probably already gained the garden-gate, and was fast on her escape.

“But,” thought he, “she will go home, or, at least, be somewhere in the city. To-morrow, at dawn, when the slaves are at work in the peristyle, I can make myself heard; then I can go forth and seek her. I shall be sure to find and bring her back, before Arbaces knows a word of the matter. Ah! that’s the best plan. Little traitress, my fingers itch at thee: and to leave only a bowl of water, too! Had it been wine, it would have been some comfort.”

While Sosia, thus entrapped, was lamenting his fate, and revolving his schemes to repossess himself of Nydia, the blind girl, with that singular precision and dexterous rapidity of motion, which, we have before observed, was peculiar to her, had passed lightly along the peristyle, threaded the opposite passage that led into the garden, and, with a beating heart, was about to proceed towards the gate, when she suddenly heard the sound of approaching steps, and distinguished the dreaded voice of Arbaces himself. She paused for a moment in doubt and terror; then suddenly it flashed across her recollection that there was another passage which was little used except for the admission of the fair partakers of the Egyptian’s secret revels, and

which wound along the basement of that massive fabric towards a door which also communicated with the garden. By good fortune it might be open. At that thought, she hastily retraced her steps, descended the narrow stairs at the right, and was soon at the entrance of the passage. Alas! the door at the entrance was closed and secured. While she was yet assuring herself that it was indeed locked, she heard behind her the voice of Calenus, and, a moment after, that of Arbaces in low reply. She could not stay there; they were probably passing to that very door. She sprang onward, and felt herself in unknown ground. The air grew damp and chill; this reassured her. She thought she might be among the cellars of the luxurious mansion, or, at least, in some rude spot not likely to be visited by its haughty lord, when, again, her quick ear caught steps and the sound of voices. On, on, she hurried, extending her arms, which now frequently encountered pillars of thick and massive form. With a tact, doubled in acuteness by her fear, she escaped these perils, and continued her way, the air growing more and more damp as she proceeded; yet, still, as she ever and anon paused for breath, she heard the advancing steps and the indistinct murmur of voices. At length she was abruptly stopped by a wall that seemed the limit of her path. Was there no spot in which she could hide? No aperture? no cavity? There was none! She stopped, and wrung her hands in despair; then again, nerved as the voices neared upon her, she hurried on by the

side of the wall; and coming suddenly against one of the sharp buttresses that here and there jutted boldly forth, she fell to the ground. Though much bruised, her senses did not leave her; she uttered no cry; nay, she hailed the accident that had led her to something like a screen; and creeping close up to the angle formed by the buttress, so that on one side at least she was sheltered from view, she gathered her slight and small form into its smallest compass, and breathlessly awaited her fate.

Meanwhile Arbaces and the priest were taking their way to that secret chamber whose stores were so vaunted by the Egyptian. They were in a vast subterranean atrium, or hall; the low roof was supported by short, thick pillars of an architecture far remote from the Grecian graces of that luxuriant period. The single and pale lamp, which Arbaces bore, shed but an imperfect ray over the bare and rugged walls, in which the huge stones, without cement, were fitted curiously and uncouthly into each other. The disturbed reptiles glared dully on the intruders, and then crept into the shadow of the walls.

Calenus shivered as he looked around and breathed the damp, unwholesome air.

"Yet," said Arbaces, with a smile, perceiving his shudder, "it is these rude abodes that furnish the luxuries of the halls above. They are like the labourers of the world,—we despise their ruggedness, yet they feed the very pride that disdains them."

"And whither goes yon dim gallery to the left?"

asked Calenus; "in this depth of gloom it seems without limit, as if winding into Hades."

"On the contrary, it does but conduct to the upper day," answered Arbaces, carelessly: "it is to the right that we steer to our bourn."

The hall, like many in the more habitable regions of Pompeii, branched off at the extremity into two wings or passages; the length of which, not really great, was to the eye considerably exaggerated by the sullen gloom against which the lamp so faintly struggled. To the right of these *alæ* the two comrades now directed their steps.

"The gay Glaucus will be lodged to-morrow in apartments not much drier, and far less spacious than this," said Calenus, as they passed by the very spot where, completely wrapped in the shadow of the broad projecting buttress, cowered the Thessalian.

"Ay," but then he will have dry room, and ample enough, in the arena on the following day. And to think," continued Arbaces, slowly, and very deliberately—"to think that a word of thine could save him, and consign Arbaces to his doom!"

"That word shall never be spoken!" said Calenus.

"Right, my Calenus! it never shall," returned Arbaces, familiarly leaning his arm on the priest's shoulder: "and now, halt—we are at the door."

The light trembled against a small door deep set in the wall, and guarded strongly by many plates and bindings of iron, that intersected the rough and dark wood. From his girdle Arbaces now drew a small

ring, holding three or four short but strong keys. Oh, how beat the griping heart of Calenus, as he heard the rusty wards growl, as if resenting the admission to the treasures they guarded !

“Enter, my friend,” said Arbaces, “while I hold the lamp on high, that thou mayest glut thine eyes on the yellow heaps.”

The impatient Calenus did not wait to be twice invited ; he hastened towards the aperture.

Scarcely had he crossed the threshold, when the strong hand of Arbaces plunged him forwards.

“*The word shall never be spoken !*” said the Egyptian, with a loud, exultant laugh, and closed the door upon the priest.

Calenus had been precipitated down several steps, but not feeling at the moment the pain of his fall, he sprung up again to the door, and beating at it fiercely with his clenched fist, he cried aloud in what seemed more a beast’s howl than a human voice, so keen was his agony and despair : “Oh, release me, release me, and I will ask no gold !”

The words but imperfectly penetrated the massive door, and Arbaces again laughed. Then, stamping his foot violently, rejoined, perhaps to give vent to his long-stifled passions—

“All the gold of Dalmatia,” cried he, “will not buy thee a crust of bread. Starve, wretch ! thy dying groans will never wake even the echo of these vast halls : nor will the air ever reveal, as thou gnawest, in

thy desperate famine, thy flesh from thy bones, that so perishes the man who threatened, and could have undone, Arbaces ! Farewell !”

“Oh, pity—mercy ! Inhuman villain ; was it for this——”

The rest of the sentence was lost to the ear of Arbaces as he passed backward along the dim hall. A toad, plump and bloated, lay unmoving before his path ; the rays of the lamp fell upon its unshaped hideousness and red upward eye. Arbaces turned aside that he might not harm it.

“Thou art loathsome and obscene,” he muttered, “but thou canst not injure me ; therefore thou art safe in my path.”

The cries of Calenus, dulled and choked by the barrier that confined him, yet faintly reached the ear of the Egyptian. He paused and listened intently.

“This is unfortunate,” thought he ; “for I cannot sail till that voice is dumb for ever. My stores and treasures lie, not in yon dungeon, it is true, but in the opposite wing. My slaves, as they move them, must not hear his voice. But what fear of that ? In three days, if he still survive, his accents, by my father’s beard, must be weak enough then !—no, they could not pierce even through his tomb. By Isis, it is cold !—I long for a deep draught of the spiced Falernian.”

With that the remorseless Egyptian drew his gown closer round him, and resought the upper air.

CHAPTER XIV.

Nydia accosts Calenus.

WHAT words of terror, yet of hope, had Nydia overheard ! The next day Glaucus was to be condemned ; yet there lived one who could save him, and adjudge Arbaces to his doom, and that one breathed within a few steps of her hiding-place ! She caught his cries and shrieks—his imprecations—his prayers, though they fell choked and muffled on her ear. He was imprisoned, but she knew the secret of his cell : could she but escape—could she but seek the prætor, he might yet in time be given to light, and preserve the Athenian. Her emotions almost stifled her ; her brain reeled—she felt her sense give way—but by a violent effort she mastered herself ; and after listening intently for several minutes, till she was convinced that Arbaces had left the space to solitude and herself, she crept on as her ear guided her to the very door that had closed upon Calenus. Here she more distinctly caught his accents of terror and despair. Thrice she attempted to speak, and thrice her voice failed to penetrate the folds of the heavy door. At length finding the lock, she applied her lips to its small aperture, and the prisoner distinctly heard a soft tone breathe his name.

His blood curdled—his hair stood on end. That awful solitude, what mysterious and preternatural being could penetrate! “Who’s there?” he cried, in new alarm; “what spectre—what dread *larva*, calls upon the lost Calenus?”

“Priest,” replied the Thessalian, “unknown to Arbaces, I have been, by the permission of the gods, a witness to his perfidy. If I myself can escape from these walls, I may save thee. But let thy voice reach my ear through this narrow passage, and answer what I ask.”

“Ah, blessed spirit,” said the priest, exultingly, and obeying the suggestion of Nydia, “save me, and I will sell the very cups on the altar to pay thy kindness.”

“I want not thy gold—I want thy secret. Did I hear aright?—Canst thou save the Athenian Glaucus from the charge against his life?”

“I can—I can!—therefore (may the Furies blast the foul Egyptian!) hath Arbaces snared me thus, and left me to starve and rot!”

“They accuse the Athenian of murder; canst thou disprove the accusation?”

“Only free me, and the proudest head of Pompeii is not more safe than his. I saw the deed done—I saw Arbaces strike the blow; I can convict the true murderer and acquit the innocent man. But if I perish, he dies also. Dost thou interest thyself for him? O blessed stranger, in my heart is the urn which condemns or frees him!”

“And thou wilt give full evidence of what thou knowest?”

“Will!—Oh! were hell at my feet—yes! Revenge on the false Egyptian!—revenge! revenge! revenge!”

As through his ground teeth Calenus shrieked forth those last words, Nydia felt that in his worst passions was her certainty of his justice to the Athenian. Her heart beat: was it—was it to be her proud destiny to preserve her idolised—her adored? “Enough,” said she; “the powers that conducted me hither will carry me through all. Yes, I feel that I shall deliver thee. Wait in patience and hope.”

“But be cautious, be prudent, sweet stranger. Attempt not to appeal to Arbaces—he is marble. Seek the prætor—say what thou knowest—obtain his writ of search; bring soldiers, and smiths of cunning—these locks are wondrous strong! Time flies—I may starve—starve! if you are not quick! Go—go! Yet stay—it is horrible to be alone!—the air is like a charnel—and the scorpions—ha! and the pale larvæ! Oh! stay, stay!”

“Nay,” said Nydia, terrified by the terror of the priest, and anxious to confer with herself,—“nay, for thy sake, I must depart. Take Hope for thy companion—farewell!”

So saying, she glided away, and felt with extended arms along the pillared space until she had gained the farther end of the hall and the mouth of the passage that led to the upper air. But there she paused; she

felt that it would be more safe to wait awhile, until the night was so far blended with the morning that the whole house would be buried in sleep, and so that she might quit it unobserved. She therefore once more laid herself down, and counted the weary moments. In her sanguine heart, joy was the predominant emotion. Glaucus was in deadly peril—but *she* should save him !

CHAPTER XV.

Arbaces and Ione.—Nydia gains the garden.—Will she escape and save the Athenian?

WHEN Arbaces had warmed his veins by large draughts of that spiced and perfumed wine so valued by the luxurious, he felt more than usually elated and exultant of heart. There is a pride in triumphant ingenuity, not less felt, perhaps, though its object be guilty. Our vain human nature hugs itself in the consciousness of superior craft and self-obtained success — afterwards comes the horrible reaction of remorse.

But remorse was not a feeling which Arbaces was likely ever to experience for the fate of the base Calenus. He swept from his remembrance the thought of the priest's agonies and lingering death : he felt only that a great danger was passed, and a possible foe silenced ; all left to him now would be to account to the priesthood for the disappearance of Calenus ; and this he imagined it would not be difficult to do. Calenus had often been employed by him in various religious missions to the neighbouring cities. On some such errand he could now assert that he had been sent, with offerings to the shrines of Isis at Herculaneum and Neapolis, placatory to the goddess for the recent murder of her

priest Apæcides. When Calenus had expired, his body might be thrown, previous to the Egyptian's departure from Pompeii, into the deep stream of the Sarnus; and when discovered, suspicion would probably fall upon the Nazarene atheists, as an act of revenge for the death of Olinthus at the arena. After rapidly running over these plans for screening himself, Arbaces dismissed at once from his mind all recollection of the wretched priest; and, animated by the success which had lately crowned all his schemes, he surrendered his thoughts to Ione. The last time he had seen her, she had driven him from her presence by a reproachful and bitter scorn, which his arrogant nature was unable to endure. He now felt emboldened once more to renew that interview; for his passion for her was like similar feelings in other men—it made him restless for her presence, even though in that presence he was exasperated and humbled. From delicacy to her grief he laid not aside his dark and unfestive robes, but, renewing the perfumes on his raven locks, and arranging his tunic in its most becoming folds, he sought the chamber of the Neapolitan. Accosting the slave in attendance without, he inquired if Ione had yet retired to rest; and learning that she was still up, and unusually quiet and composed, he ventured into her presence. He found his beautiful ward sitting before a small table, and leaning her face upon both her hands in the attitude of thought. Yet the expression of the face itself possessed not its wonted bright and Psyche-like expression of sweet intelligence; the lips were apart—the eye vacant and unheeding—

and the long dark hair, falling neglected and dishevelled upon her neck, gave by the contrast additional paleness to a cheek which had already lost the roundness of its contour.

Arbaces gazed upon her a moment ere he advanced. She, too, lifted up her eyes; and when she saw who was the intruder, shut them with an expression of pain, but did not stir.

"Ah!" said Arbaces, in a low and earnest tone, as he respectfully, nay, humbly, advanced and seated himself at a little distance from the table—"Ah! that my death could remove thy hatred, then would I gladly die! Thou wrongest me, Ione; but I will bear the wrong without a murmur, only let me see thee sometimes. Chide, reproach, scorn me, if thou wilt—I will teach myself to bear it. And is not even thy bitterest tone sweeter to me than the music of the most artful lute? In thy silence the world seems to stand still—a stagnation curdles up the veins of the earth—there is no earth, no life, without the light of thy countenance and the melody of thy voice."

"Give me back my brother and my betrothed," said Ione, in a calm and imploring tone, and a few large tears rolled unheeded down her cheeks.

"Would that I could restore the one and save the other!" returned Arbaces, with apparent emotion. "Yes; to make thee happy I would renounce my ill-fated love, and gladly join thy hand to the Athenian's. Perhaps he will yet come unscathed from his trial" [Arbaces had prevented her learning that the trial had

already commenced]; “if so, thou art free to judge or condemn him thyself. And think not, O Ione, that I would follow thee longer with a prayer of love. I know it is in vain. Suffer me only to weep—to mourn with thee. Forgive a violence deeply repented, and that shall offend no more. Let me be to thee only what I once was—a friend, a father, a protector. Ah, Ione! spare me and forgive.”

“I forgive thee. Save but Glaucus, and I will renounce him. O mighty Arbaces! thou art powerful in evil or in good: save the Athenian, and the poor Ione will never see him more.” As she spoke, she rose with weak and trembling limbs, and falling at his feet, she clasped his knees: “Oh! if thou really lovest me—if thou art human—remember my father’s ashes, remember my childhood, think of all the hours we passed happily together, and save my Glaucus!”

Strange convulsions shook the frame of the Egyptian; his features worked fearfully—he turned his face aside, and said, in a hollow voice, “If I could save him, even now, I would; but the Roman law is stern and sharp. Yet if I *could* succeed—if I *could* rescue and set him free—wouldst thou be mine—my bride?”

“Thine?” repeated Ione, rising: “thine!—thy bride? My brother’s blood is unavenged: *who* slew him? O Nemesis, can I even sell, for the life of Glaucus, thy solemn trust? Arbaces—*thine*? Never.”

“Ione, Ione!” cried Arbaces, passionately; “why these mysterious words?—why dost thou couple my name with the thought of thy brother’s death?”

"My dreams couple it—and dreams are from the gods."

"Vain fantasies all! Is it for a dream that thou wouldst wrong the innocent, and hazard thy sole chance of saving thy lover's life?"

"Hear me!" said Ione, speaking firmly, and with a deliberate and solemn voice: "if Glaucus be saved by thee, I will never be borne to his home a bride. But I cannot master the horror of other rites: I cannot wed with thee. Interrupt me not; but mark me, Arbaces!—if Glaucus die, on that same day I baffle thine arts, and leave to thy love only my dust! Yes,—thou mayest put the knife and the poison from my reach—thou mayest imprison—thou mayest chain me, but the brave soul resolved to escape is never without means. These hands, naked and unarmed though they be, shall tear away the bonds of life. Fetter them, and these lips shall firmly refuse the air. Thou art learned—thou hast read how women have died rather than meet dishonour. If Glaucus perish, I will not unworthily linger behind him. By all the gods of the heaven, and the ocean, and the earth, I devote myself to death! I have said!"

High, proud, dilating in her stature, like one inspired, the air and voice of Ione struck an awe into the breast of her listener.

"Brave heart!" said he, after a short pause; "thou art indeed worthy to be mine. Oh! that I should have dreamt of such a partner in my lofty destinies, and never found it but in thee! Ione," he continued,

rapidly, "dost thou not see that we are born for each other? Canst thou not recognise something kindred to thine own energy—thine own courage—in this high and self-dependent soul? We were formed to unite our sympathies—formed to breathe a new spirit into this hackneyed and gross world—formed for the mighty ends which my soul, sweeping down the gloom of time, foresees with a prophet's vision. With a resolution equal to thine own, I defy thy threats of an inglorious suicide. I hail thee as my own! Queen of climes undarkened by the eagle's wing, unravaged by his beak, I bow before thee in homage and in awe—but I claim thee in worship and in love! Together will we cross the ocean—together will we found our realm; and far-distant ages shall acknowledge the long race of kings born from the marriage-bed of Arbaces and Ione!"

"Thou ravest! These mystic declamations are suited rather to some palsied crone selling charms in the market-place than to the wise Arbaces. Thou hast heard my resolution,—it is fixed as the Fates themselves. Orcus has heard my vow, and it is written in the book of the unforgetful Hades. Atone, then, O Arbaces!—atone the past: convert hatred into regard—vengeance into gratitude; preserve one who shall never be thy rival. These are acts suited to thy original nature, which gives forth sparks of something high and noble. They weigh in the scales of the Kings of Death: they turn the balance on that day when the disembodied soul stands shivering and dismayed between Tartarus

and Elysium; they gladden the heart in life, better and longer than the reward of a momentary passion. Oh, Arbaces! hear me, and be swayed!"

"Enough, Ione. All that I can do for Glaucus shall be done; but blame me not if I fail. Inquire of my foes, even, if I have not sought, if I do not seek, to turn aside the sentence from his head, and judge me accordingly. Sleep then, Ione. Night wanes; I leave thee to its rest,—and mayest thou have kinder dreams of one who has no existence but in thine."

Without waiting a reply, Arbaces hastily withdrew; afraid, perhaps, to trust himself further to the passionate prayer of Ione, which racked him with jealousy, even while it touched him to compassion. But compassion itself came too late. Had Ione even pledged him her hand as his reward, he could not now—his evidence given—the populace excited—have saved the Athenian. Still, made sanguine by his very energy of mind, he threw himself on the chances of the future, and believed he should yet triumph over the woman that had so entangled his passions.

As his attendants assisted to unrobe him for the night the thought of Nydia flashed across him. He felt it was necessary that Ione should never learn of her lover's frenzy, lest it might excuse his imputed crime; and it was possible that her attendants might inform her that Nydia was under his roof, and she might desire to see her. As this idea crossed him, he turned to one of his freedmen—

"Go, Callias," said he, "forthwith to Sosia, and tell

him, that on no pretence is he to suffer the blind slave Nydia out of her chamber. But, stay—first seek those in attendance upon my ward, and caution them not to inform her that the blind girl is under my roof. Go—quick!”

The freedman hastened to obey. After having discharged his commission with respect to Ione's attendants, he sought the worthy Sosia. He found him not in the little cell which was apportioned for his cubiculum; he called his name aloud, and from Nydia's chamber, close at hand, he heard the voice of Sosia reply—

“Oh, Callias, is it you that I hear?—the gods be praised! Open the door, I pray you!”

Callias withdrew the bolt, and the rueful face of Sosia hastily obtruded itself.

“What!—in the chamber with that young girl, Sosia! *Proh pudor!* Are there not fruits ripe enough on the wall, but that thou must tamper with such green——”

“Name not the little witch!” interrupted Sosia, impatiently; “she will be my ruin!” And he forthwith imparted to Callias the history of the Air Demon, and the escape of the Thessalian.

“Hang thyself, then, unhappy Sosia! I am just charged from Arbaces with a message to thee;—on no account art thou to suffer her, even for a moment, from that chamber!”

“*Me miserum!*” exclaimed the slave. “What can I do?—by this time she may have visited half Pom-

peii. But to-morrow I will undertake to catch her in her old haunts. Keep but my counsel, my dear Callias."

"I will do all that friendship can, consistent with my own safety. But are you sure she has left the house?—she may be hiding here yet."

"How is that possible? She could easily have gained the garden; and the door, as I told thee, was open."

"Nay, not so; for at that very hour thou specifiest, Arbaces was in the garden with the priest Calenus. I went there in search of some herbs for my master's bath to-morrow. I saw the table set out; but the gate I am sure was shut: depend upon it, that Calenus entered by the garden, and naturally closed the door after him."

"But it was not locked."

"Yes; for I myself, angry at a negligence which might expose the bronzes in the peristyle to the mercy of any robber, turned the key, took it away, and—as I did not see the proper slave to whom to give it, or I should have rated him finely—here it actually is, still in my girdle."

"Oh, merciful Bacchus! I did not pray to thee in vain, after all. Let us not lose a moment! Let us to the garden instantly—she may yet be there!"

The good-natured Callias consented to assist the slave; and after vainly searching the chambers at hand, and the recesses of the peristyle, they entered the garden.

It was about this time that Nydia had resolved to quit her hiding-place, and venture forth on her way. Lightly, tremulously, holding her breath, which ever and anon broke forth in quick convulsive gasps,—now gliding by the flower-wreathed columns that bordered the peristyle—now darkening the still moonshine that fell over its tessellated centre—now ascending the terrace of the garden—now gliding amidst the gloomy and breathless trees, she gained the fatal door—to find it locked! We have all seen that expression of pain, of uncertainty, of fear, which a sudden disappointment of touch, if I may use the expression, casts over the face of the blind. But what words can paint the intolerable woe, the sinking of the whole heart, which was now visible on the features of the Thessalian? Again and again her small quivering hands wandered to and fro the inexorable door. Poor thing that thou wert! in vain had been all thy noble courage, thy innocent craft, thy doublings to escape the hound and huntsman! Within but a few yards from thee, laughing at thy endeavours—thy despair—knowing thou wert now their own, and watching with cruel patience their own moment to seize their prey—thou art saved from seeing thy pursuers!

“Hush, Callias!—let her go on. Let us see what she will do when she has convinced herself that the door is honest.”

“Look! she raises her face to the heavens—she mutters—she sinks down despondent! No! by Pol-lux, she has some new scheme! She will not resign

herself! By Jupiter, a tough spirit! See, she springs up—she retraces her steps—she thinks of some other chance! I advise thee, Sosia, to delay no longer: seize her ere she quit the garden,—now!”

“Ah! runaway! I have thee—eh?” said Sosia, seizing upon the unhappy Nydia.

As a hare's last *human* cry in the fangs of the dogs—as the sharp voice of terror uttered by a sleep-walker suddenly awakened—broke the shriek of the blind girl, when she felt the abrupt gripe of her jailer. It was a shriek of such utter agony, such entire despair, that it might have rung hauntingly in your ears for ever. She felt as if the last plank of the sinking Glaucus were torn from his clasp. It had been a suspense of life and death; and death had now won the game.

“Gods! that cry will alarm the house! Arbaces sleeps full lightly. Gag her!” cried Callias.

“Ah! here is the very napkin with which the young witch conjured away my reason! Come, that's right; now thou art dumb as well as blind.”

And, catching the light weight in his arms, Sosia soon gained the house, and reached the chamber from which Nydia had escaped. There, removing the gag, he left her to a solitude so racked and terrible, that out of Hades its anguish could scarcely be exceeded.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Sorrow of Boon Companions for our Afflictions.—The Dungeon and its Victims.

It was now late on the third and last day of the trial of Glaucus and Olinthus. A few hours after the court had broke up and judgment been given, a small party of the fashionable youth at Pompeii were assembled round the fastidious board of Lepidus.

“So Glaucus denies his crime to the last!” said Clodius.

“Yes; but the testimony of Arbaces was convincing; he saw the blow given,” answered Lepidus.

“What could have been the cause?”

“Why, the priest was a gloomy and sullen fellow. He probably rated Glaucus soundly about his gay life and gaming habits, and ultimately swore he would not consent to his marriage with Ione. High words arose: Glaucus seems to have been full of the passionate god, and struck in sudden exasperation. The excitement of wine, the desperation of abrupt remorse, brought on the delirium under which he suffered for some days; and I can readily imagine, poor fellow! that, yet confused by that delirium, he is even now unconscious of

the crime he committed ! Such, at least, is the shrewd conjecture of Arbaces, who seems to have been most kind and forbearing in his testimony."

"Yes ; he has made himself generally popular by it. But, in consideration of these extenuating circumstances, the senate should have relaxed the sentence."

"And they *would* have done so, but for the people ; but *they* were outrageous. The priest had spared no pains to excite them ; and they imagined—the ferocious brutes !—because Glaucus was a rich man and a gentleman, that he was likely to escape ; and therefore they were inveterate against him, and doubly resolved upon his sentence. It seems, by some accident or other, that he was never formally enrolled as a Roman citizen ; and thus the senate is deprived of the power to resist the people, though, after all, there was but a majority of three against him. Ho ! the Chian !"

"He looks sadly altered ; but how composed and fearless !"

"Ay, we shall see if his firmness will last over to-morrow. But what merit in courage, when that atheistical hound, Olinthus, manifested the same ?"

"The blasphemer ! Yes," said Lepidus, with pious wrath, "no wonder that one of the decurions was, but two days ago, struck dead by lightning in a serene sky.* The gods feel vengeance against Pompeii while the vile desecrator is alive within its walls."

* Pliny says that, immediately before the eruption of Vesuvius, one of the *decuriones municipales* was—though the heaven was unclouded—struck dead by lightning.

"Yet so lenient was the senate, that had he but expressed his penitence, and scattered a few grains of incense on the altar of Cybele, he would have been let off. I doubt whether these Nazarenes, had they the state religion, would be as tolerant to us, supposing we had kicked down the image of their Deity, blasphemed their rites, and denied their faith."

"They give Glaucus one chance, in consideration of the circumstances; they allow him, against the lion, the use of the same stilus wherewith he smote the priest."

"Hast thou seen the lion? hast thou looked at his teeth and fangs, and wilt thou call *that* a chance? Why, sword and buckler would be mere reed and papyrus against the rush of the mighty beast! No, I think the true mercy has been, not to leave him long in suspense; and it was therefore fortunate for him that our benign laws are slow to pronounce, but swift to execute; and that the games of the amphitheatre had been, by a sort of providence, so long since fixed for to-morrow. He who awaits death, dies twice."

"As for the Atheist," said Clodius, "he is to cope the grim tiger naked-handed. Well, these combats are past betting on. Who will take the odds?"

A peal of laughter announced the ridicule of the question.

"Poor Clodius!" said the host; "to lose a friend is something; but to find no one to bet on the chance of his escape is a worse misfortune to thee."

"Why, it is provoking; it would have been some

consolation to him and to me to think he was useful to the last."

"The people," said the grave Pansa, "are all delighted with the result. They were so much afraid the sports at the amphitheatre would go off without a criminal for the beasts; and now, to get two *such* criminals is indeed a joy for the poor fellows! They work hard; they ought to have some amusement."

"There speaks the popular Pansa, who never moves without a string of clients as long as an Indian triumph. He is always prating about the people. Gods! he will end by being a Gracchus!"

"Certainly I am no insolent patrician," said Pansa, with a generous air.

"Well," observed Lepidus, "it would have been assuredly dangerous to have been merciful at the eve of a beast-fight. If ever *I*, though a Roman bred and born, come to be tried, pray Jupiter there may be either no beasts in the *vivaria*, or plenty of criminals in the jail."

"And pray," said one of the party, "what has become of the poor girl whom Glaucus was to have married? A widow without being a bride—that is hard!"

"Oh," returned Clodius, "she is safe under the protection of her guardian, Arbaces. It was natural she should go to him when she had lost both lover and brother."

"By sweet Venus, Glaucus was fortunate among the women! They say the rich Julia was in love with him."

"A mere fable, my friend," said Clodius, coxcombingly ; "I was with her to-day. If any feeling of the sort she ever conceived, I flatter myself that *I* have consoled her."

"Hush, gentlemen!" said Pansa ; "do you not know that Clodius is employed at the house of Diomed in blowing hard at the torch? It begins to burn, and will soon shine bright on the shrine of Hymen."

"Is it so?" said Lepidus. "What! Clodius become a married man?—Fie!"

"Never fear," answered Clodius ; "old Diomed is delighted at the notion of marrying his daughter to a nobleman, and will come down largely with the ses-terces. You will see that I shall not lock them up in the atrium. It will be a white day for his jolly friends when Clodius marries an heiress."

"Say you so?" cried Lepidus ; "come, then, a full cup to the health of the fair Julia!"

While such was the conversation—one not discordant to the tone of mind common among the dissipated of that day, and which might perhaps, a century ago, have found an echo in the looser circles of Paris—while such, I say, was the conversation in the gaudy triclinium of Lepidus, far different the scene which scowled before the young Athenian.

After his condemnation, Glaucus was admitted no more to the gentle guardianship of Sallust, the only friend of his distress. He was led along the forum till the guards stopped at a small door by the side of the temple of Jupiter. You may see the place still.

The door opened in the centre in a somewhat singular fashion, revolving round on its hinges, as it were, like a modern turnstile, so as only to leave half the threshold open at the same time. Through this narrow aperture they thrust the prisoner, placed before him a loaf and a pitcher of water, and left him to darkness, and, as he thought, to solitude. So sudden had been that revolution of fortune which had prostrated him from the palmy height of youthful pleasure and successful love to the lowest abyss of ignominy, and the horror of a most bloody death, that he could scarcely convince himself that he was not held in the meshes of some fearful dream. His elastic and glorious frame had triumphed over a potion, the greater part of which he had fortunately not drained. He had recovered sense and consciousness, but still a dim and misty depression clung to his nerves and darkened his mind. His natural courage, and the Greek nobility of pride, enabled him to vanquish all unbecoming apprehension, and, in the judgment-court, to face his awful lot with a steady mien and unquailing eye. But the consciousness of innocence scarcely sufficed to support him when the gaze of men no longer excited his haughty valour, and he was left to loneliness and silence. He felt the damps of the dungeon sink chillingly into his enfeebled frame. *He*—the fastidious, the luxurious, the refined—he who had hitherto braved no hardship and known no sorrow. Beautiful bird that he was! why had he left his far and sunny clime—the olive-groves of his native hills—the music of immemorial streams? Why

had he wantoned on his glittering plumage amidst these harsh and ungenial strangers, dazzling the eyes with his gorgeous hues, charming the ear with his blithesome song—thus suddenly to be arrested—caged in darkness—a victim and a prey—his gay flights for ever over—his hymns of gladness for ever stilled ! The poor Athenian ! his very faults the exuberance of a gentle and joyous nature, how little had his past career fitted him for the trials he was destined to undergo ! The hoots of the mob, amidst whose plaudits he had so often guided his graceful car and bounding steeds, still rang gratingly in his ear. The cold and stony faces of his former friends (the co-mates of his merry revels) still rose before his eye. None now were by to soothe, to sustain the admired, the adulated stranger. These walls opened but on the dread arena of a violent and shameful death. And Ione ; of her, too, he had heard naught ; no encouraging word, no pitying message ; she, too, had forsaken him ; she believed him guilty—and of what crime ?—the murder of a brother ! He ground his teeth—he groaned aloud—and ever and anon a sharp fear shot across him. In that fell and fierce delirium which had so unaccountably seized his soul, which had so ravaged the disordered brain, *might he not*, indeed, unknowing to himself, have committed the crime of which he was accused ? Yet, as the thought flashed upon him, it was as suddenly checked ; for, amidst all the darkness of the past, he thought distinctly to recall the dim grove of Cybele, the upward face of the pale dead, the pause that he had

made beside the corpse, and the sudden shock that felled him to the earth. He felt convinced of his innocence ; and yet who, to the latest time, long after his mangled remains were mingled with the elements, would believe him guiltless, or uphold his fame ? As he recalled his interview with Arbaces, and the causes of revenge which had been excited in the heart of that dark and fearful man, he could not but believe that he was the victim of some deep-laid and mysterious snare—the clue and train of which he was lost in attempting to discover ; and Ione—Arbaces loved her—might his rival's success be founded upon his ruin ? That thought cut him more deeply than all ; and his noble heart was more stung by jealousy than appalled by fear. Again he groaned aloud.

A voice from the recess of the darkness answered that burst of anguish. “Who [it said] is my companion in this awful hour ? Athenian Glaucus, is it thou ?”

“So, indeed, they called me in mine hour of fortune : they may have other names for me now. And *thy* name, stranger ?”

“Is Olinthus, thy co-mate in the prison as the trial.”

“What ! he whom they call the Atheist ? Is it the injustice of men that hath taught thee to deny the providence of the gods ?”

“Alas !” answered Olinthus : “thou, not I, art the true Atheist, for thou deniest the sole true God—the Unknown One—to whom thy Athenian fathers erected an altar. It is in this hour that I know my God.

He is with me in the dungeon ; His smile penetrates the darkness ; on the eve of death my heart whispers immortality, and earth recedes from me but to bring the weary soul nearer unto heaven."

"Tell me," said Glaucus, abruptly, "did I not hear thy name coupled with that of Apæcides in my trial? Dost thou believe me guilty?"

"God alone reads the heart ! but my suspicion rested not upon thee."

"On whom, then?"

"Thy accuser, Arbaces."

"Ha ! thou cheerest me ; and wherefore?"

"Because I know the man's evil breast, and he had cause to fear him who is now dead."

With that, Olinthus proceeded to inform Glaucus of those details which the reader already knows, the conversion of Apæcides, the plan they had proposed for the detection of the impostures of the Egyptian priest-craft, and of the seductions practised by Arbaces upon the youthful weakness of the proselyte. "Therefore," concluded Olinthus, "had the deceased encountered Arbaces, reviled his treasons, and threatened detection, the place, the hour, might have favoured the wrath of the Egyptian, and passion and craft alike dictated the fatal blow."

"It must have been so !" cried Glaucus, joyfully. "I am happy."

"Yet what, O unfortunate ! avails to thee now the discovery? Thou art condemned and fated ; and in thine innocence thou wilt perish."

“But I shall *know myself* guiltless ; and in my mysterious madness I had fearful, though momentary, doubts. Yet tell me, man of a strange creed, thinkest thou that, for small errors or for ancestral faults, we are for ever abandoned and accursed by the powers above, whatever name thou allottest to them ?”

“God is just, and abandons not His creatures for their mere human frailty. God is merciful, and curses none but the wicked who repent not.”

“Yet it seemeth to me as if, in the divine anger, I had been smitten by a sudden madness, a supernatural and solemn frenzy, wrought not by human means.”

“There are demons on earth,” answered the Nazarene, fearfully, “as well as there are God and His Son in heaven ; and since thou acknowledgest not the last, the first may have had power over thee.”

Glaucus did not reply, and there was a silence for some minutes. At length the Athenian said, in a changed, and soft, and half-hesitating voice, “Christian, believest thou, among the doctrines of thy creed, that the dead live again—that they who have loved here are united hereafter—that beyond the grave our good name shines pure from the mortal mists that unjustly dim it in the gross-eyed world—and that the streams which are divided by the desert and the rock meet in the solemn Hades, and flow once more into one ?”

“Believe I that, O Athenian ? No, I do not believe—I *know* ! and it is that beautiful and blessed assurance which supports me now. O Cyllene !” continued Olinthus, passionately, “bride of my heart ! torn from

me in the first month of our nuptials, shall I not see thee yet, and ere many days be past? Welcome, welcome death, that will bring me to heaven and thee!"

There was something in this sudden burst of human affection which struck a kindred chord in the soul of the Greek. He felt, for the first time, a sympathy greater than mere affliction between him and his companion. He crept nearer towards Olinthus; for the Italians, fierce in some points, were not unnecessarily cruel in others: they spared the separate cell and the superfluous chain, and allowed the victims of the arena the sad comfort of such freedom and such companionship as the prison would afford.

"Yes," continued the Christian, with holy fervour, "the immortality of the soul—the resurrection—the reunion of the dead—is the great principle of our creed—the great truth a God suffered death itself to attest and proclaim. No fabled Elysium—no poetic Orcus—but a pure and radiant heritage of heaven itself, is the portion of the good."

"Tell me, then, thy doctrines, and expound to me thy hopes," said Glaucus, earnestly.

Olinthus was not slow to obey that prayer; and there—as oftentimes in the early ages of the Christian creed—it was in the darkness of the dungeon, and over the approach of death, that the dawning Gospel shed its soft and consecrating rays.

CHAPTER XVII.

A Change for Glaucus.

THE hours passed in lingering torture over the head of Nydia from the time in which she had been replaced in her cell.

Sosia, as if afraid he should be again outwitted, had refrained from visiting her until late in the morning of the following day, and then he but thrust in the periodical basket of food and wine, and hastily reclosed the door. That day rolled on, and Nydia felt herself pent—barred—inexorably confined, when that day was the judgment-day of Glaucus, and when her release would have saved him! Yet knowing, almost impossible as seemed her escape, that the sole chance for the life of Glaucus rested on her, this young girl, frail, passionate, and acutely susceptible as she was—resolved not to give way to a despair that would disable her from seizing whatever opportunity *might* occur. She kept her senses whenever, beneath the whirl of intolerable thought, they reeled and tottered; nay, she took food and wine that she might sustain her strength—that she might be prepared!

She revolved scheme after scheme of escape, and was forced to dismiss all. Yet Sosia was her only hope, the only instrument with which she could tamper. He had been superstitious in the desire of ascertaining whether he could eventually purchase his freedom. Blessed gods ! might he not be won by the bribe of freedom itself ? was she not nearly rich enough to purchase it ? Her slender arms were covered with bracelets, the presents of Ione ; and on her neck she yet wore that very chain which, it may be remembered, had occasioned her jealous quarrel with Glaucus, and which she had afterwards promised vainly to wear for ever. She waited burningly till Sosia should again appear ; but as hour after hour passed, and he came not, she grew impatient. Every nerve beat with fever ; she could endure the solitude no longer—she groaned, she shrieked aloud—she beat herself against the door. Her cries echoed along the hall, and Sosia, in peevish anger, hastened to see what was the matter, and silence his prisoner if possible.

“Ho ! ho ! what is this ?” said he, surlily. “Young slave, if thou screamest out thus, we must gag thee again. My shoulders will smart for it, if thou art heard by my master.”

“Kind Sosia, chide me not—I cannot endure to be so long alone,” answered Nydia ; “the solitude appals me. Sit with me, I pray, a little while. Nay, fear not that I should attempt to escape ; place thy seat before the door. Keep thine eye on me—I will not stir from this spot.”

Sosia, who was a considerable gossip himself, was moved by this address. He pitied one who had nobody to talk with—it was his case too; he pitied—and resolved to relieve *himself*. He took the hint of Nydia, placed a stool before the door, leant his back against it, and replied,—

“I am sure I do not wish to be churlish; and so far as a little innocent chat goes, I have no objection to indulge you. But mind, no tricks—no more conjuring!”

“No, no; tell me, dear Sosia, what is the hour?”

“It is already evening—the goats are going home.”

“O gods! how went the trial?”

“Both condemned!”

Nydia repressed the shriek. “Well—well, I thought it would be so. When do they suffer?”

“To-morrow, in the amphitheatre. If it were not for thee, little wretch! I should be allowed to go with the rest and see it.”

Nydia leant back for some moments. Nature could endure no more—she had fainted away. But Sosia did not perceive it, for it was the dusk of eve, and he was full of his own privations. He went on lamenting the loss of so delightful a show, and accusing the injustice of Arbaces for singling him out from all his fellows to be converted into a jailer; and ere he had half finished, Nydia, with a deep sigh, recovered the sense of life.

“Thou sighest, blind one, at my loss? Well, that is some comfort. So long as you acknowledge how

much you cost me, I will endeavour not to grumble. It is hard to be ill-treated, and yet not pitied."

"Sosia, how much dost thou require to make up the purchase of thy freedom?"

"How much? Why, about two thousand sesterces."

"The gods be praised! not more? Seest thou these bracelets and this chain? They are well worth double that sum. I will give them thee if——"

"Tempt me not: I cannot release thee. Arbaces is a severe and awful master. Who knows but I might feed the fishes of the Sarnus? Alas! all the sesterces in the world would not buy me back into life. Better a live dog than a dead lion."

"Sosia, thy freedom! Think well! If thou wilt let me out, only for one little hour!—let me out at midnight—I will return ere to-morrow's dawn; nay, thou canst go with me."

"No," said Sosia, sturdily; "a slave once disobeyed Arbaces, and he was never more heard of."

"But the law gives a master no power over the life of a slave."

"The law is very obliging, but more polite than efficient. I know that Arbaces always gets the law on his side. Besides, if I am once dead, what law can bring me to life again!"

Nydia wrung her hands. Is there no hope, then?" said she, convulsively.

"None of escape, till Arbaces gives the word."

"Well, then," said Nydia, quickly, "thou wilt not,

at least, refuse to take a letter for me : thy master cannot kill thee for that."

"To whom?"

"The prætor."

"To a magistrate? No—not I. I should be made a witness in court, for what I know ; and the way they cross-examine the slave is by the torture."

"Pardon : I meant not the prætor—it was a word that escaped me unawares ; I meant quite another person—the gay Sallust."

"Oh ! and what want you with him?"

"Glaucus was my master ; he purchased me from a cruel lord. He alone has been kind to me. He is to die. I shall never live happily if I cannot, in his hour of trial and doom, let him know that one heart is grateful to him. Sallust is his friend ; he will convey my message."

"I am sure he will do no such thing. Glaucus will have enough to think of between this and to-morrow without troubling his head about a blind girl."

"Man," said Nydia, rising, "wilt thou become free? Thou hast the offer in thy power ; to-morrow it will be too late. Never was freedom more cheaply purchased. Thou canst easily and unmissed leave home : less than half an hour will suffice for thine absence. And for such a trifle wilt thou refuse liberty?"

Sosia was greatly moved. It was true that the request was remarkably silly ; but what was that to

him? So much the better. He could lock the door on Nydia, and, if Arbaces should learn his absence, the offence was venial, and would merit but a reprimand. Yet, should Nydia's letter contain something more than what she had said—should it speak of her imprisonment, as he shrewdly conjectured it would do—what then? It need never be known to Arbaces that *he* had carried the letter. At the worst the bribe was enormous—the risk light—the temptation irresistible. He hesitated no longer—he assented to the proposal.

“Give me the trinkets, and I will take the letter. Yet stay—thou art a slave—thou hast no right to these ornaments—they are thy master's.”

“They were the gifts of Glaucus; he is my master. What chance hath he to claim them? Who else will know they are in my possession?”

“Enough—I will bring thee the papyrus.”

“No, not papyrus—a tablet of wax and a stilus.”

Nydia, as the reader will have seen, was born of gentle parents. They had done all to lighten her calamity, and her quick intellect seconded their exertions. Despite her blindness, she had therefore acquired in childhood, though imperfectly, the art to write with the sharp stilus upon waxen tablets, in which her exquisite sense of touch came to her aid. When the tablets were brought to her, she thus painfully traced some words in Greek, the language of her childhood, and which almost every Italian of the higher ranks was then supposed to know. She carefully wound round the epistle the protecting thread, and

covered its knot with wax ; and ere she placed it in the hands of Sosia, she thus addressed him :—

“Sosia, I am blind and in prison. Thou mayest think to deceive me—thou mayest pretend only to take the letter to Sallust—thou mayest not fulfil thy charge : but here I solemnly dedicate thy head to vengeance, thy soul to the infernal powers, if thou wrongest thy trust ; and I call upon thee to place thy right hand of faith in mine, and repeat after me these words :—‘By the ground on which we stand—by the elements which contain life and can curse life—by Orcus, the all-avenging—by the Olympian Jupiter, the all-seeing—I swear that I will honestly discharge my trust, and faithfully deliver into the hands of Sallust this letter ! And if I perjure myself in this oath, may the full curses of heaven and hell be wreaked upon me !’ Enough !—I trust thee—take thy reward. It is already dark—depart at once.”

“Thou art a strange girl, and thou hast frightened me terribly ; but it is all very natural : and if Sallust is to be found, I give him this letter as I have sworn. By my faith, I may have my little peccadilloes ! but perjury—no ! I leave *that* to my betters.”

With this Sosia withdrew, carefully passing the heavy bolt athwart Nydia’s door—carefully locking its wards : and, hanging the key to his girdle, he retired to his own den, enveloped himself from head to foot in a huge disguising-cloak, and slipped out by the back way undisturbed and unseen.

The streets were thin and empty. He soon gained

the house of Sallust. The porter bade him leave his letter, and be gone ; for Sallust was so grieved at the condemnation of Glaucus, that he could not on any account be disturbed.

“Nevertheless, I have sworn to give this letter into his own hands—do so I must!” And Sosia, well knowing by experience that Cerberus loves a sop, thrust some half-a-dozen sesterces into the hand of the porter.

“Well, well,” said the latter, relenting, “you may enter if you will ; but, to tell you the truth, Sallust is drinking himself out of his grief. It is his way when anything disturbs him. He orders a capital supper, the best wine, and does not give over till everything is out of his head—but the liquor.”

“An excellent plan—excellent ! Ah, what it is to be rich ! If I were Sallust, I would have some grief or another every day. But just say a kind word for me with the atriensis—I see him coming.”

Sallust was too sad to receive company ; he was too sad, also, to drink alone ; so, as was his wont, he admitted his favourite freedman to his entertainment,—and a stranger banquet never was held. For, ever and anon, the kind-hearted epicure sighed, whimpered, wept outright, and then turned with double zest to some new dish or his refilled goblet.

“My good fellow,” said he to his companion, “it was a most awful judgment—heighho !—it is not bad that kid, eh ? Poor, dear Glaucus !—what a jaw the lion has too ! Ah, ah, ah !”

And Sallust sobbed loudly—the fit was stopped by a counteraction of hiccups.

“Take a cup of wine,” said the freedman.

“A thought too cold; but then how cold Glaucus must be! Shut up the house to-morrow—not a slave shall stir forth—none of my people shall honour that cursed arena—No, no!”

“Taste the Falernian—your grief distracts you. By the gods it does!—a piece of that cheesecake.”

It was at this auspicious moment that Sosia was admitted to the presence of the disconsolate carouser.

“Ho!—what art thou?”

“Merely a messenger to Sallust. I give him this billet from a young female. There is no answer that I know of. May I withdraw?”

Thus said the discreet Sosia, keeping his face muffled in his cloak, and speaking with a feigned voice, so that he might not hereafter be recognised.

“By the gods—a pimp! Unfeeling wretch!—do you not see my sorrows? Go!—and the curses of Pandarus with you!”

Sosia lost not a moment in retiring.

“Will you read the letter, Sallust?” said the freedman.

“Letter!—*which* letter?” said the epicure, reeling, for he began to see double. “A curse on these wenches, say I! Am I a man to think of (*hiccup*)—pleasure, when—when—my friend is going to be eat up?”

“Eat another tartlet.”

“No, no! My grief chokes me!”

"Take him to bed," said the freedman; and, Sallust's head now declining fairly on his breast, they bore him off to his cubiculum, still muttering lamentations for Glaucus, and imprecations on the unfeeling overtures of ladies of pleasure.

Meanwhile Sosia strode indignantly homeward. "Pimp, indeed!" quoth he to himself. "Pimp! a scurvy-tongued fellow that Sallust! Had I been called knave, or thief, I could have forgiven it; but pimp! Faugh! there is something in the word which the toughest stomach in the world would rise against. A knave is a knave for his own pleasure, and a thief a thief for his own profit; and there is something honourable and philosophical in being a rascal for one's own sake: that is doing things upon principle—upon a grand scale. But a pimp is a thing that defiles itself for another—a pipkin that is put on the fire for another man's pottage! a napkin, that every guest wipes his hands upon! and the scullion says, 'by your leave,' too. A pimp! I would rather he had called me paricide! But the man was drunk, and did not know what he said; and, besides, I disguised myself. Had he seen it had been Sosia who addressed him, it would have been 'honest Sosia!' and 'worthy man!' I warrant. Nevertheless, the trinkets have been won easily—that's some comfort! and, O goddess Feronia! I shall be a freedman soon! and then I should like to see who'll call me pimp!—unless, indeed, he pay me pretty handsomely for it!"

While Sosia was soliloquising in this high-minded

and generous vein, his path lay along a narrow lane that led towards the amphitheatre and its adjacent palaces. Suddenly, as he turned a sharp corner, he found himself in the midst of a considerable crowd. Men, women, and children, all were hurrying on, laughing, talking, gesticulating; and, ere he was aware of it, the worthy Sosia was borne away with the noisy stream.

"What now?" he asked of his nearest neighbour, a young artificer—"what now? Where are all these good folks thronging? Does any rich patron give away alms or viands to-night?"

"Not so, man—better still," replied the artificer; "the noble Pansa—the people's friend—has granted the public leave to see the beasts in their *vivaria*. By Hercules! they will not be seen so safely by some persons to-morrow!"

"'Tis a pretty sight," said the slave, yielding to the throng that impelled him onward; "and since I may not go to the sports to-morrow, I may as well take a peep at the beasts to-night."

"You will do well," returned his new acquaintance; "a lion and a tiger are not to be seen at Pompeii every day."

The crowd had now entered a broken and wide space of ground, on which, as it was only lighted scantily and from a distance, the press became dangerous to those whose limbs and shoulders were not fitted for a mob. Nevertheless, the women especially—many of them with children in their arms, or even at the breast—were the most resolute in forcing their way; and

their shrill exclamations of complaint or oburgation were heard loud above the more jovial and masculine voices. Yet, amidst them was a young and girlish voice, that appeared to come from one too happy in her excitement to be alive to the inconvenience of the crowd.

"Aha!" cried the young woman, to some of her companions, "I always told you so; I always said we should have a man for the lion; and now we have one for the tiger too! I wish to-morrow were come!"

"Ho! ho! for the merry, merry show,
With a forest of faces in every row!
Lo! the swordsmen, bold as the son of Alcæna,
Sweep, side by side, o'er the hushed arena.
Talk while you may, you will hold your breath
When they meet in the grasp of the glowing death!
Tramp! tramp! how gaily they go!
Ho! ho! for the merry, merry show!"

"A jolly girl!" said Sosia.

"Yes," replied the young artificer, a curly-headed, handsome youth. "Yes," replied he, enviously; "the women love a gladiator. If I had been a slave I would have soon found my schoolmaster in the lanista!"

"Would you, indeed?" said Sosia, with a sneer. "People's notions differ!"

The crowd had now arrived at the place of destination; but as the cell in which the wild beasts were confined was extremely small and narrow, tenfold more vehement than it hitherto had been was the rush of the aspirants to obtain admittance. Two of the officers of the amphitheatre, placed at the entrance, very wisely

mitigated the evil by dispensing to the foremost only a limited number of tickets at a time, and admitting no new visitors till their predecessors had sated their curiosity. Sosia, who was a tolerably stout fellow, and not troubled with any remarkable scruples of diffidence or good-breeding, contrived to be among the first of the initiated.

Separated from his companion the artificer, Sosia found himself in a narrow cell of oppressive heat and atmosphere, and lighted by several rank and flaring torches.

The animals, usually kept in different vivaria, or dens, were now, for the greater entertainment of the visitors, placed in one, but equally indeed divided from each other by strong cages protected by iron bars.

There they were, the fell and grim wanderers of the desert, who have now become almost the principal agents of this story. The lion, who, as being the more gentle by nature than his fellow-beast, had been more incited to ferocity by hunger, stalked restlessly and fiercely to and fro his narrow confines: his eyes were lurid with rage and famine; and as, every now and then, he paused and glared around, the spectators fearfully pressed backward, and drew their breath more quickly. But the tiger lay quiet and extended at full length in his cage, and only by an occasional play of his tail, or a long impatient yawn, testified any emotion at his confinement, or at the crowd which honoured him with their presence.

“I have seen no fiercer beast than yon lion even in

the amphitheatre of Rome," said a gigantic and sinewy fellow who stood at the right hand of Sosia.

"I feel humbled when I look at his limbs," replied, at the left of Sosia, a slighter and younger figure, with his arms folded on his breast.

The slave looked first at one, and then at the other. "*Virtus in medio!*—virtue is ever in the middle!" muttered he to himself; "a goodly neighbourhood for thee, Sosia—a gladiator on each side!"

"That is well said, Lydon," returned the huger gladiator; "I feel the same."

"And to think," observed Lydon, in a tone of deep feeling—"to think that the noble Greek, he whom we saw but a day or two since before us, so full of youth, and health, and joyousness, is to feast you monster!"

"Why not?" growled Niger, savagely; "many an honest gladiator has been compelled to a like combat by the emperor—why not a wealthy murderer by the law?"

Lydon sighed, shrugged his shoulders, and remained silent. Meanwhile the common gazers listened with staring eyes and lips apart: the gladiators were objects of interest as well as the beasts—they were animals of the same species: so the crowd glanced from one to the other—the men and the brutes:—whispering their comments and anticipating the morrow.

"Well!" said Lydon, turning away, "I thank the gods that it is not the lion or the tiger *I* am to contend with; even you, Niger, are a gentler combatant than they."

"But equally dangerous," said the gladiator, with a

fierce laugh ; and the bystanders, admiring his vast limbs and ferocious countenance, laughed too.

“That as it may be,” answered Lydon, carelessly, as he pressed through the throng and quitted the den.

“I may as well take advantage of his shoulders,” thought the prudent Sosia, hastening to follow him : “the crowd always give way to a gladiator, so I will keep close behind, and come in for a share of his consequence.”

The son of Medon strode quickly through the mob, many of whom recognised his features and profession.

“That is young Lydon, a brave fellow ; he fights to-morrow,” said one.

“Ah ! I have a bet on him,” said another ; “see how firmly he walks !”

“Good luck to thee, Lydon !” said a third.

“Lydon, you have my wishes,” half whispered a fourth, smiling (a comely woman of the middle class)—“and if you win, why, you may hear more of me.”

“A handsome man, by Venus !” cried a fifth, who was a girl scarce in her teens. “Thank you,” returned Sosia, gravely, taking the compliment to himself.

However strong the purer motives of Lydon, and certain though it be that he would never have entered so bloody a calling but from the hope of obtaining his father’s freedom, he was not altogether unmoved by the notice he excited. He forgot that the voices now raised in commendation might, on the morrow, shout over his death-pangs. By nature fierce and reckless, as well as generous and warm-hearted, he was already imbued

with the pride of a profession that he fancied he disdained, and affected by the influence of a companionship that in reality he loathed. He saw himself now a man of importance ; his step grew yet lighter, and his mien more elate.

"Niger," said he, turning suddenly, as he had now threaded the crowd : "we have often quarrelled ; we are not matched against each other, but one of us, at least, may reasonably expect to fall—give us thy hand."

"Most readily," said Sosia, extending his palm.

"Ha ! what fool is this ? Why, I thought Niger was at my heels !"

"I forgive the mistake," replied Sosia, condescendingly : "don't mention it ; the error was easy—I and Niger are somewhat of the same build."

"Ha ! ha ! that is excellent ! Niger would have slit thy throat had he heard thee !"

"You gentlemen of the arena have a most disagreeable mode of talking," said Sosia : "let us change the conversation."

"*Vah ! vah !*" said Lydon, impatiently ; "I am in no humour to converse with thee !"

"Why, truly," returned the slave, "you must have serious thoughts enough to occupy your mind : to-morrow is, I think, your first essay in the arena. Well, I am sure you will die bravely !"

"May thy words fall on thine own head !" said Lydon, superstitiously, for he by no means liked the blessing of Sosia. "*Die !* No—I trust *my* hour is not yet come."

“He who plays at dice with death must expect the dog’s throw,” replied Sosia, maliciously. “But you are a strong fellow, and I wish you all imaginable luck ; and so, *vale* !”

With that the slave turned on his heel, and took his way homeward.

“I trust the rogue’s words are not ominous,” said Lydon, musingly. “In my zeal for my father’s liberty, and my confidence in my own thews and sinews, I have not contemplated the possibility of death. My poor father ! I am thy only son !—if I were to fall——”

As the thought crossed him, the gladiator strode on with a more rapid and restless pace, when suddenly, in an opposite street, he beheld the very object of his thoughts. Leaning on his stick, his form bent by care and age, his eyes downcast, and his steps trembling, the grey-haired Medon slowly approached towards the gladiator. Lydon paused a moment : he divined at once the cause that brought forth the old man at that late hour.

“Be sure, it is I whom he seeks,” thought he ; “he is horror-struck at the condemnation of Olinthus—he more than ever esteems the arena criminal and hateful—he comes again to dissuade me from the contest. I must shun him—I cannot brook his prayers—his tears.”

These thoughts, so long to recite, flashed across the young man like lightning. He turned abruptly and fled swiftly in an opposite direction. He paused not till, almost spent and breathless, he found himself on the summit of a small acclivity which overlooked the

most gay and splendid part of that miniature city; and as there he paused, and gazed along the tranquil streets glittering in the rays of the moon (which had just arisen, and brought partially and picturesquely into light the crowd around the amphitheatre at a distance, murmuring, and swaying to and fro), the influence of the scene affected him, rude and unimaginative though his nature. He sat himself down to rest upon the steps of a deserted portico, and felt the calm of the hour quiet and restore him. Opposite and near at hand, the lights gleamed from a palace in which the master now held his revels. The doors were open for coolness, and the gladiator beheld the numerous and festive group gathered round the tables in the atrium;* while behind them, closing the long vista of the illumined rooms beyond, the spray of the distant fountain sparkled in the moonbeams. There, the garlands wreathed around the columns of the hall—there, gleamed still and frequent the marble statue—there, amidst peals of jocund laughter, rose the music and the lay.

EPICUREAN SONG.

“ Away with your stories of Hades,
Which the Flamen has forged to affright us,—
We laugh at your three Maiden Ladies,
Your Fates,—and your sullen Cocytus.
Poor Jove has a troublesome life, sir,
Could we credit your tales of his portals—
In shutting his ears on his wife, sir,
And opening his eyes upon mortals.

* In the atrium, as I have elsewhere observed, a larger party of guests than ordinary was frequently entertained.

Oh, blest be the bright Epicurus !
Who taught us to laugh at such fables ;
On Hades they wanted to moor us,
And his hand cut the terrible cables.

If, then, there's a Jove or a Juno,
They vex not their heads about us, man :
Besides, if they did, I and you know
'Tis the life of a god to live *thus*, man !

What ! think you the gods place their bliss—eh,
In playing the spy on a sinner ?
In counting the girls that we kiss, eh ?
Or the cups that we empty at dinner ?

Content with the soft lips that love us,
This music, this wine, and this mirth, boys,
We care not for gods up above us,—
We know there's no god for this earth, boys !”

While Lydon's piety (which, accommodating as it might be, was in no slight degree disturbed by these verses, which embodied the fashionable philosophy of the day) slowly recovered itself from the shock it had received, a small party of men, in plain garments and of the middle class, passed by his resting-place. They were in earnest conversation, and did not seem to notice or heed the gladiator as they moved on.

“Oh, horror on horrors !” said one ; “Olinthus is snatched from us ! our right arm is lopped away ! When will Christ descend to protect his own ?”

“Can human atrocity go farther ?” said another : “to sentence an innocent man to the same arena as a murderer ? But let us not despair ; the thunder of Sinai may yet be heard, and the Lord preserve His saint. ‘The fool has said in his heart, There is no God.’”

At that moment out broke again, from the illumined palace, the burden of the revellers' song :—

“ We care not for gods up above us,—
We know there's no god for this earth, boys !” *

Ere the words died away, the Nazarenes, moved by sudden indignation, caught up the echo, and, in the words of one of their favourite hymns, shouted aloud—

THE WARNING HYMN OF THE NAZARENES.

“ Around—about—for ever near thee,
God—OUR GOD—shall mark and hear thee !
On His car of storm He sweeps !
Bow, ye heavens, and shrink, ye deeps !
Woe to the proud ones who defy Him !—
Woe to the dreamers who deny Him !
Woe to the wicked, woe !
The proud stars shall fail—
The sun shall grow pale—
The heavens shrivel up like a scroll—
Hell's ocean shall bare
Its depths of despair,
Each wave an eternal soul !
For the only thing, then,
That shall *not* live again
Is the corpse of the giant TIME !
Hark, the trumpet of thunder !
Lo, earth rent asunder !
And, forth, on his Angel-throne,
He comes through the gloom,
The Judge of the Tomb,
To summon and save his own !
Oh, joy to Care, and woe to Crime,
He comes to save His own !
Woe to the proud ones who defy Him !
Woe to the dreamers who deny Him !
Woe to the wicked, woe !”

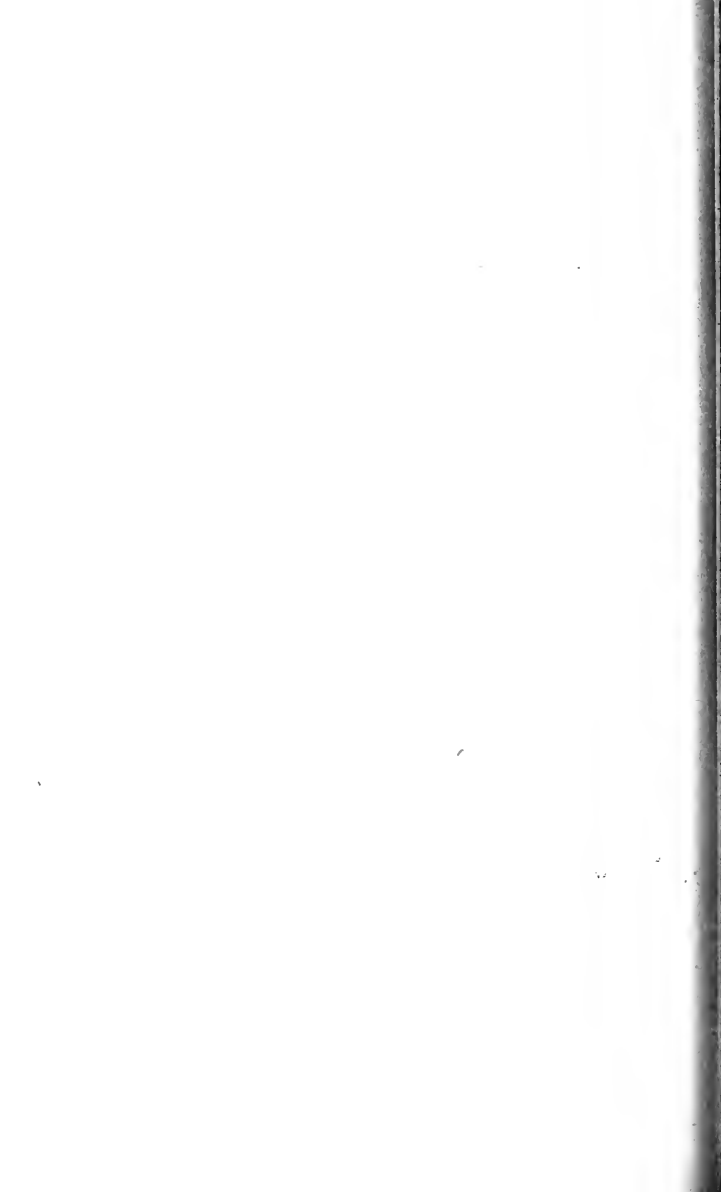
* See note (a) at the end.

A sudden silence from the startled hall of revel succeeded these ominous words ; the Christians swept on, and were soon hidden from the sight of the gladiator. Awed, he scarce knew why, by the mystic denunciations of the Christians, Lydon, after a short pause, now rose to pursue his way homeward.

Before him, how serenely slept the starlight on that lovely city ! how breathlessly its pillared streets reposed in their security !—how softly rippled the dark-green waves beyond !—how cloudless spread, aloft and blue, the dreaming Campanian skies ! Yet this was the last night for the gay Pompeii ! the colony of the hoar Chaldean ! the fabled city of Hercules ! the delight of the voluptuous Roman ! Age after age had rolled, indestructive, unheeded, over its head ; and now the last ray quivered on the dial-plate of its doom ! The gladiator heard some light steps behind—a group of females were wending homeward from their visit to the amphitheatre. As he turned, his eye was arrested by a strange and sudden apparition. From the summit of Vesuvius, darkly visible at the distance, there shot a pale, meteoric, livid light—it trembled an instant and was gone. And at the same moment that his eye caught it, the voice of one of the youngest of the women broke out hilariously and shrill :—

“TRAMP ! TRAMP ! HOW GAILY THEY GO !

HO, HO ! FOR THE MORROW'S MERRY SHOW !”



BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

The Dream of Arbaces—A Visitor and a Warning to the Egyptian.

THE awful night preceding the fierce joy of the amphitheatre rolled drearily away, and greyly broke forth the dawn of THE LAST DAY OF POMPEII ! The air was uncommonly calm and sultry—a thin and dull mist gathered over the valleys and hollows of the broad Campanian fields. But yet it was remarked in surprise by the early fishermen, that, despite the exceeding stillness of the atmosphere, the waves of the sea were agitated, and seemed, as it were, to run disturbedly back from the shore ; while along the blue and stately Sarnus, whose ancient breadth of channel the traveller now vainly seeks to discover, there crept a hoarse and sullen murmur, as it glided by the laughing plains and the gaudy villas of the wealthy citizens. Clear above the low mist rose the time-worn towers of the immemorial town, the red-tiled roofs of the bright

streets, the solemn columns of many temples, and the statue-crowned portals of the Forum and the Arch of Triumph. Far in the distance, the outline of the circling hills soared above the vapours, and mingled with the changeful hues of the morning sky. The cloud that had so long rested over the crest of Vesuvius had suddenly vanished, and its rugged and haughty brow looked without a frown over the beautiful scenes below.

Despite the earliness of the hour, the gates of the city were already opened. Horseman upon horseman, vehicle after vehicle, poured rapidly in ; and the voices of numerous pedestrian groups, clad in holiday attire, rose high in joyous and excited merriment ; the streets were crowded with citizens and strangers from the populous neighbourhood of Pompeii ; and noisily—fast—confusedly swept the many streams of life towards the fatal show.

Despite the vast size of the amphitheatre, seemingly so disproportioned to the extent of the city, and formed to include nearly the whole population of Pompeii itself, so great, on extraordinary occasions, was the concourse of strangers from all parts of Campania, that the space before it was usually crowded for several hours previous to the commencement of the sports, by such persons as were not entitled by their rank to appointed and special seats. And the intense curiosity which the trial and sentence of two criminals so remarkable had occasioned, increased the crowd on this day to an extent wholly unprecedented.

While the common people, with the lively vehemence of their Campanian blood, were thus pushing, scrambling, hurrying on—yet, amidst all their eagerness, preserving, as is now the wont with Italians in such meetings, a wonderful order and unquarrelsome good-humour—a strange visitor to Arbaces was threading her way to his sequestered mansion. At the sight of her quaint and primeval garb—of her wild gait and gestures—the passengers she encountered touched each other and smiled; but as they caught a glimpse of her countenance, the mirth was hushed at once, for the face was as the face of the dead; and what with the ghastly features and obsolete robes of the stranger, it seemed as if one long entombed had risen once more amongst the living. In silence and awe each group gave way as she passed along, and she soon gained the broad porch of the Egyptian's palace.

The black porter, like the rest of the world, astir at an unusual hour, started as he opened the door to her summons.

The sleep of the Egyptian had been unusually profound during the night; but, as the dawn approached, it was disturbed by strange and unquiet dreams, which impressed him the more as they were coloured by the peculiar philosophy he embraced.

He thought that he was transported to the bowels of the earth, and that he stood alone in a mighty cavern, supported by enormous columns of rough and primeval rock, lost, as they ascended, in the vastness of a shadow athwart whose eternal darkness no beam

of day had ever glanced. And in the space between these columns were huge wheels, that whirled round and round unceasingly, and with a rushing and roaring noise. Only to the right and left extremities of the cavern, the space between the pillars was left bare, and the apertures stretched away into galleries—not wholly dark, but dimly lighted by wandering and erratic fires, that, meteor-like, now crept (as the snake creeps) along the rugged and dank soil ; and now leaped fiercely to and fro, darting across the vast gloom in wild gambols—suddenly disappearing, and as suddenly bursting into tenfold brilliancy and power. And while he gazed wonderingly upon the gallery to the left, thin, mist-like, ærial shapes passed slowly up ; and when they had gained the hall, they seemed to rise aloft, and to vanish, as the smoke vanishes, in the measureless ascent.

He turned in fear towards the opposite extremity—and behold ! there came swiftly, from the gloom above, similar shadows, which swept hurriedly along the gallery to the right, as if borne involuntarily adown the tides of some invisible stream ; and the faces of these spectres were more distinct than those that emerged from the opposite passage ; and on some was joy, and on others sorrow—some were vivid with expectation and hope, some unutterably dejected by awe and horror. And so they passed swift and constantly on, till the eyes of the gazer grew dizzy and blinded with the whirl of an ever-varying succession of things impelled by a power apparently not their own.

Arbaces turned away, and in the recess of the hall he saw the mighty form of a giantess seated upon a pile of skulls, and her hands were busy upon a pale and shadowy woof; and he saw that the woof communicated with the numberless wheels, as if it guided the machinery of their movements. He thought his feet, by some secret agency, were impelled towards the female, and that he was borne onwards till he stood before her, face to face. The countenance of the giantess was solemn and hushed, and beautifully serene. It was as the face of some colossal sculpture of his own ancestral sphinx. No passion—no human emotion, disturbed its brooding and unwrinkled brow; there was neither sadness, nor joy, nor memory, nor hope; it was free from all with which the wild human heart can sympathise. The mystery of mysteries rested on its beauty—it awed, but terrified not; it was the Incarnation of the Sublime. And Arbaces felt the voice leave his lips, without an impulse of his own; and the voice asked—

“Who art thou, and what is thy task?”

“I am That which thou hast acknowledged,” answered, without desisting from its work, the mighty phantom. “My name is NATURE! These are the wheels of the world, and my hand guides them for the life of all things.”

“And what,” said the voice of Arbaces, “are these galleries, that, strangely and fitfully illumined, stretch on either hand into the abyss of gloom?”

“That,” answered the giant mother, “which thou

beholdest to the left, is the gallery of the Unborn. The shadows that flit onward and upward into the world, are the souls that pass from the long eternity of being to their destined pilgrimage on earth. That which thou beholdest to thy right, wherein the shadows descending from above sweep on, equally unknown and dim, is the gallery of the Dead !”

“And, wherefore,” said the voice of Arbaces, “yon wandering lights, that so wildly break the darkness ; but only *break*, not *reveal* ?”

“Dark fool of the human sciences ! dreamer of the stars, and would-be decipherer of the heart and origin of things ! those lights are but the glimmerings of such knowledge as is vouchsafed to Nature to work her way, to trace enough of the past and future to give providence to her designs. Judge, then, puppet as thou art, what lights are reserved for thee !”

Arbaces felt himself tremble as he asked again, “Wherefore am I here ?”

“It is the forecast of thy soul—the prescience of thy rushing doom—the shadow of thy fate lengthening into eternity as it declines from earth.”

Ere he could answer, Arbaces felt a rushing wind sweep down the cavern, as the winds of a giant god. Borne aloft from the ground, and whirled on high as a leaf in the storms of autumn, he beheld himself in the midst of the Spectres of the Dead, and hurrying with them along the length of gloom. As in vain and impotent despair he struggled against the impelling power, he thought the wind grew into something like a shape

—a spectral outline of the wings and talons of an eagle, with limbs floating far and indistinctly along the air, and eyes that, alone clearly and vividly seen, glared stonily and remorselessly on his own.

“What art thou?” again said the voice of the Egyptian.

“I am That which thou hast acknowledged ;” and the spectre laughed aloud—“and my name is NECESSITY.”

“To what dost thou bear me ?”

“To the Unknown.”

“To happiness or to woe ?”

“As thou hast sown, so shalt thou reap.”

“Dread thing, not so ! If thou art the Ruler of life, *thine* are my misdeeds, not mine.”

“I am but the breath of God !” answered the mighty WIND.

“Then is my wisdom vain !” groaned the dreamer.

“The husbandman accuses not fate, when, having sown thistles, he reaps not corn. Thou hast sown crime ; accuse not fate if thou reapest not the harvest of virtue.”

The scene suddenly changed. Arbaces was in a place of human bones ; and lo ! in the midst of them was a skull, and the skull, still retaining its fleshless hollows, assumed slowly, and in the mysterious confusion of a dream, the face of Apæcides ; and forth from the grinning jaws there crept a small worm, and it crawled to the feet of Arbaces. He attempted to stamp on it and crush it ; but it became longer and larger with that

attempt. It swelled and bloated till it grew into a vast serpent: it coiled itself round the limbs of Arbaces; it crunched his bones; it raised its glaring eyes and poisonous jaws to his face. He writhed in vain; he withered—he gasped—beneath the influence of the blighting breath—he felt himself blasted into death. And then a voice came from the reptile, which still bore the face of Apæcides, and rang in his reeling ear—

“THY VICTIM IS THY JUDGE! THE WORM THOU WOULDST CRUSH BECOMES THE SERPENT THAT DEVOURS THEE!”

With a shriek of wrath, and woe, and despairing resistance, Arbaces awoke—his hair on end—his brow bathed in dew—his eyes glazed and staring—his mighty frame quivering as an infant’s, beneath the agony of that dream. He awoke—he collected himself—he blessed the gods whom he disbelieved, that he *was* in a dream;—he turned his eyes from side to side—he saw the dawning light break through his small but lofty window—he was in the Precincts of Day—he rejoiced—he smiled; his eyes fell, and opposite to him he beheld the ghastly features, the lifeless eye, the livid lip—of the Hag of Vesuvius!

“Ha!” he cried, placing his hands before his eyes, as to shut out the grisly vision, “do I dream still?—Am I with the dead?”

“Mighty Hermes—no! Thou art with one death-like, but not dead. Recognise thy friend and slave.”

There was a long silence. Slowly the shudders that

passed over the limbs of the Egyptian chased each other away, faintlier and faintlier dying till he was himself again.

"It was a dream, then," said he. "Well—let me dream no more, or the day cannot compensate for the pangs of night. Woman, how camest thou here, and wherefore?"

"I came to warn thee," answered the sepulchral voice of the Saga.

"Warn me! The dream lied not, then? Of what peril?"

"Listen to me! Some evil hangs over this fated city. Fly while it be time. Thou knowest that I hold my home on that mountain beneath which old tradition saith there yet burn the fires of the river of Phlegethon; and in my cavern is a vast abyss, and in that abyss I have of late marked a red and dull stream creep slowly, slowly on; and heard many and mighty sounds hissing and roaring through the gloom. But last night, as I looked thereon, behold the stream was no longer dull, but intensely and fiercely luminous; and while I gazed, the beast that liveth with me, and was cowering by my side, uttered a shrill howl, and fell down and died,* and the slaver and froth were round his lips. I crept back to my lair; but I distinctly heard, all the night, the rock shake and tremble; and though the air was heavy and still, there were the hissing of pent winds, and the grinding as of wheels,

* We may suppose that the exhalations were similar in effect to those of the *Grotta del Cane*.

beneath the ground. So, when I rose this morning at the very birth of dawn, I looked again down the abyss, and I saw vast fragments of stone borne black and floatingly over the lurid stream; and the stream itself was broader, fiercer, redder than the night before. Then I went forth, and ascended to the summit of the rock; and in that summit there appeared a sudden and vast hollow which I had never perceived before, from which curled a dim, faint smoke; and the vapour was deathly, and I gasped, and sickened, and nearly died. I returned home, I took my gold and my drugs, and left the habitation of many years; for I remembered the dark Etruscan prophecy which saith, ‘When the mountain opens, the city shall fall—when the smoke crowns the Hill of the Parched Fields, there shall be woe and weeping in the hearths of the Children of the Sea.’ Dread master, ere I leave these walls for some more distant dwelling, I come to thee. As thou livest, know I in my heart that the earthquake that sixteen years ago shook this city to its solid base, was but the forerunner of more deadly doom. The walls of Pompeii are built above the fields of the Dead, and the rivers of the sleepless Hell. Be warned and fly!”

“Witch, I thank thee for thy care of one not ungrateful. On yon table stands a cup of gold; take it, it is thine. I dreamt not that there lived one, out of the priesthood of Isis, who would have saved Arbaces from destruction. The signs thou hast seen in the bed of the extinct volcano,” continued the Egyptian, musingly, “surely tell of some coming danger to the city;

perhaps another earthquake fiercer than the last. Be that as it may, there is a new reason for my hastening from these walls. After this day I will prepare my departure. Daughter of Etruria, whither wendest thou?"

"I shall cross over to Herculaneum this day, and, wandering thence along the coast, shall seek out a new home. I am friendless; my two companions, the fox and the snake, are dead. Great Hermes, thou hast promised me twenty additional years of life!"

"Ay," said the Egyptian, "I have promised thee. But, woman," he added, lifting himself upon his arm, and gazing curiously on her face, "tell me, I pray thee, wherefore thou wishest to live? What sweets dost thou discover in existence?"

"It is not life that is sweet, but death that is awful," replied the hag, in a sharp, impressive tone, that struck forcibly upon the heart of the vain star-seer. He winced at the truth of the reply: and, no longer anxious to retain so uninviting a companion, he said, "Time wanes; I must prepare for the solemn spectacle of this day. Sister, farewell! enjoy thyself as thou canst over the ashes of life."

The hag, who had placed the costly gift of Arbaces in the loose folds of her vest, now rose to depart. When she had gained the door, she paused, turned back, and said, "This may be the last time we meet on earth; but whither flieth the flame when it leaves the ashes?—Wandering to and fro, up and down, as an exhalation on the morass, the flame may be seen in the marshes of the lake below; and the witch and the

Magian, the pupil and the master, the great one and the accursed one, may meet again. Farewell !”

“ Out, croaker !” muttered Arbaces, as the door closed on the hag’s tattered robes ; and, impatient of his own thoughts, not yet recovered from the past dream, he hastily summoned his slaves.

It was the custom to attend the ceremonials of the amphitheatre in festive robes, and Arbaces arrayed himself that day with more than usual care. His tunic was of the most dazzling white ; his many fibulæ were formed from the most precious stones : over his tunic flowed a loose Eastern robe, half-gown, half-mantle, glowing in the richest hues of the Tyrian dye ; and the sandals, that reached half-way up the knee, were studded with gems and inlaid with gold. In the quackeries that belonged to his priestly genius, Arbaces never neglected, on great occasions, the arts which dazzle and impose upon the vulgar ; and on this day, that was for ever to release him, by the sacrifice of Glaucus, from the fear of a rival and the chance of detection, he felt that he was arraying himself as for a triumph or a nuptial feast.

It was customary for men of rank to be accompanied to the shows of the amphitheatre by a procession of their slaves and freedmen ; and the long “ family ” of Arbaces were already arranged in order, to attend the litter of their lord.

Only, to their great chagrin, the slaves in attendance on Ione, and the worthy Sosia, as gaoler to Nydia, were condemned to remain at home.

“Callias,” said Arbaces, apart to his freedman, who was buckling on his girdle, “I am weary of Pompeii; I propose to quit it in three days, should the wind favour. Thou knowest the vessel that lies in the harbour which belonged to Narses, of Alexandria; I have purchased it of him. The day after to-morrow we shall begin to remove my stores.”

“So soon! ’Tis well. Arbaces shall be obeyed;—and his ward, Ione?”

“Accompanies me. Enough!—Is the morning fair?”

“Dim and oppressive; it will probably be intensely hot in the forenoon.”

“The poor gladiators, and more wretched criminals! Descend, and see that the slaves are marshalled.”

Left alone, Arbaces stepped into his chamber of study, and thence upon the portico without. He saw the dense masses of men pouring fast into the amphitheatre, and heard the cry of the assistants, and the cracking of the cordage, as they were straining aloft the huge awning under which the citizens, molested by no discomforting ray, were to behold, at luxurious ease, the agonies of their fellow-creatures. Suddenly a wild, strange sound went forth, and as suddenly died away—it was the roar of the lion. There was a silence in the distant crowd; but the silence was followed by joyous laughter—they were making merry at the hungry impatience of the royal beast.

“Brutes!” muttered the disdainful Arbaces, “are ye less homicides than I am? *I* slay but in self-defence—ye make murder pastime.”

He turned, with a restless and curious eye, towards Vesuvius. Beautifully glowed the green vineyards round its breast, and tranquil as eternity lay in the breathless skies the form of the mighty hill.

"We have time yet, if the earthquake be nursing," thought Arbaces; and he turned from the spot. He passed by the table which bore his mystic scrolls and Chaldean calculations.

"August art!" he thought, "I have not consulted thy decrees since I passed the danger and the crisis they foretold. What matter?—I know that *henceforth* all in my path is bright and smooth. Have not events already proved it? Away, doubt—away, pity! Reflect, O my heart—reflect, for the future, but two images—Empire and Ione!"

CHAPTER II.

The Amphitheatre.

NYDIA, assured by the account of Sosia, on his return home, and satisfied that her letter was in the hands of Sallust, gave herself up once more to hope. Sallust would surely lose no time in seeking the prætor—in coming to the house of the Egyptian—in releasing her—in breaking the prison of Calenus. That very night Glaucus would be free. Alas ! the night passed—the dawn broke ; she heard nothing but the hurried footsteps of the slaves along the hall and peristyle, and their voices in preparation for the show. By-and-by, the commanding voice of Arbaces broke on her ear—a flourish of music rung out cheerily : the long processions were sweeping to the amphitheatre to glut their eyes on the death-pangs of the Athenian !

The procession of Arbaces moved along slowly, and with much solemnity, till now, arriving at the place where it was necessary for such as came in litters or chariots to alight, Arbaces descended from his vehicle, and proceeded to the entrance by which the more distinguished spectators were admitted. His slaves,

mingling with the humbler crowd, were stationed by officers who received their tickets (not much unlike our modern Opera ones), in places in the *popularia* (the seats apportioned to the vulgar). And now, from the spot where Arbaces sat, his eyes scanned the mighty and impatient crowd that filled the stupendous theatre.

On the upper tier (but apart from the male spectators) sat the women, their gay dresses resembling some gaudy flower-bed ; it is needless to add that they were the most talkative part of the assembly ; and many were the looks directed up to them, especially from the benches appropriated to the young and the unmarried men. On the lower seats round the arena sat the more high-born and wealthy visitors—the magistrates and those of senatorial or equestrian* dignity : the passages which, by corridors at the right and left, gave access to the seats, at either end of the oval arena, were also the entrances for the combatants. Strong palings at these passages prevented any unwelcome eccentricity in the movements of the beasts, and confined them to their appointed prey. Around the parapet which was raised above the arena, and from which the seats gradually rose, were gladiatorial inscriptions, and paintings wrought in fresco, typical of the entertainments for which the place was designed. Throughout the whole building wound invisible pipes, from which, as the day advanced, cooling and fragrant showers were to be sprinkled over the spectators. The officers of the amphitheatre were still employed in the

* The equites sat immediately behind the senators.

task of fixing the vast awning (or *velaria*) which covered the whole, and which luxurious invention the Campanians arrogated to themselves: it was woven of the whitest Apulian wool, and variegated with broad stripes of crimson. Owing either to some inexperience on the part of the workmen, or to some defect in the machinery, the awning, however, was not arranged that day so happily as usual; indeed, from the immense space of the circumference, the task was always one of great difficulty and art—so much so, that it could seldom be adventured in rough or windy weather. But the present day was so remarkably still that there seemed to the spectators no excuse for the awkwardness of the artificers; and when a large gap in the back of the awning was still visible, from the obstinate refusal of one part of the *velaria* to ally itself with the rest, the murmurs of discontent were loud and general.

The ædile Pansa, at whose expense the exhibition was given, looked particularly annoyed at the defect, and vowed bitter vengeance on the head of the chief officer of the show, who, fretting, puffing, perspiring, busied himself in idle orders and unavailing threats.

The hubbub ceased suddenly—the operators desisted—the crowd were stilled—the gap was forgotten—for now, with a loud and warlike flourish of trumpets, the gladiators, marshalled in ceremonious procession, entered the arena. They swept round the oval space very slowly and deliberately, in order to give the spectators full leisure to admire their stern serenity of feature—their brawny limbs and various arms, as well as to form

such wagers as the excitement of the moment might suggest.

"Oh!" cried the widow Fulvia to the wife of Pansa, as they leaned down from their lofty bench, "do you see that gigantic gladiator? how drolly he is dressed!"

"Yes," said the ædile's wife with complacent importance, for she knew all the names and qualities of each combatant; "he is a retiarius or netter; he is armed only, you see, with a three-pronged spear like a trident, and a net; he wears no armour, only the fillet and the tunic. He is a mighty man, and is to fight with Sporus, yon thick-set gladiator, with the round shield and drawn sword, but without body armour; he has not his helmet on now, in order that you may see his face—how fearless it is!—by-and-by he will fight with his vizor down."

"But surely a net and a spear are poor arms against a shield and sword?"

"That shows how innocent you are, my dear Fulvia; the retiarius has generally the best of it."

"But who is yon handsome gladiator, nearly naked—is it not quite improper? By Venus! but his limbs are beautifully shaped!"

"It is Lydon, a young untried man! he has the rashness to fight yon other gladiator similarly dressed, or rather undressed—Tetraides. They fight first in the Greek fashion, with the cestus; afterwards they put on armour, and try sword and shield."

"He is a proper man, this Lydon; and the women, I am sure, are on his side."

“So are not the experienced betters ; Clodius offers three to one against him.”

“Oh, Jove ! how beautiful !” exclaimed the widow, as two gladiators, armed *cap-à-pié*, rode round the arena on light and prancing steeds. Resembling much the combatants in the tilts of the middle age, they bore lances and round shields beautifully inlaid : their armour was woven intricately with bands of iron, but it covered only the thighs and the right arms ; short cloaks, extending to the seat, gave a picturesque and graceful air to their costume ; their legs were naked with the exception of sandals, which were fastened a little above the ankle. “Oh, beautiful ! Who are these ?” asked the widow.

“The one is named Berbix—he has conquered twelve times ; the other assumes the arrogant name of Nobilior. They are both Gauls.”

While thus conversing, the first formalities of the show were over. To these succeeded a feigned combat with wooden swords between the various gladiators matched against each other. Amongst these, the skill of two Roman gladiators, hired for the occasion, was the most admired ; and next to them the most graceful combatant was Lydon. This sham contest did not last above an hour, nor did it attract any very lively interest, except among those connoisseurs of the arena to whom art was preferable to more coarse excitement ; the body of the spectators were rejoiced when it was over, and when the sympathy rose to terror. The combatants were now arranged in pairs, as agreed beforehand ; their

weapons examined ; and the grave sports of the day commenced amidst the deepest silence—broken only by an exciting and preliminary blast of warlike music.

It was often customary to begin the sports by the most cruel of all, and some bestiarius, or gladiator appointed to the beasts, was slain first, as an initiatory sacrifice. But in the present instance, the experienced Pansa thought it better that the sanguinary drama should advance, not decrease, in interest ; and, accordingly, the execution of Olinthus and Glaucus was reserved for the last. It was arranged that the two horsemen should first occupy the arena ; that the foot-gladiators, paired off, should then be loosed indiscriminately on the stage ; that Glaucus and the lion should next perform their part in the bloody spectacle ; and the tiger and the Nazarene be the grand finale. And, in the spectacles of Pompeii, the reader of Roman history must limit his imagination, nor expect to find those vast and wholesale exhibitions of magnificent slaughter with which a Nero or a Caligula regaled the inhabitants of the Imperial City. The Roman shows, which absorbed the more celebrated gladiators, and the chief proportion of foreign beasts, were indeed the very reason why, in the lesser towns of the empire, the sports of the amphitheatre were comparatively humane and rare ; and in this, as in other respects, Pompeii was but the miniature, the microcosm of Rome. Still, it was an awful and imposing spectacle, with which modern times have, happily, nothing to compare ;—a vast theatre, rising row upon row, and swarming with human beings, from

fifteen to eighteen thousand in number, intent upon no fictitious representation—no tragedy of the stage—but the actual victory or defeat, the exultant life or the bloody death, of each and all who entered the arena !

The two horsemen were now at either extremity of the lists (if so they might be called); and at a given signal from Pansa, the combatants started simultaneously as in full collision, each advancing his round buckler, each poising on high his light yet sturdy javelin; but just when within three paces of his opponent, the steed of Berbix suddenly halted, wheeled round, and, as Nobilior was borne rapidly by, his antagonist spurred upon him. The buckler of Nobilior, quickly and skilfully extended, received a blow which otherwise would have been fatal.

“Well done, Nobilior !” cried the prætor, giving the first vent to the popular excitement.

“Bravely struck, my Berbix !” answered Clodius from his seat.

And the wild murmur, swelled by many a shout, echoed from side to side.

The vizors of both the horsemen were completely closed (like those of the knights in after times), but the head was, nevertheless, the great point of assault; and Nobilior, now wheeling his charger with no less adroitness than his opponent, directed his spear full on the helmet of his foe. Berbix raised his buckler to shield himself, and his quick-eyed antagonist, suddenly lowering his weapon, pierced him through the breast. Berbix reeled and fell.

“Nobilior! Nobilior!” shouted the populace.

“I have lost ten sestertia,”* said Clodius, between his teeth.

“*Habet!*—he has it,” said Pansa, deliberately.

The populace, not yet hardened into cruelty, made the signal of mercy; but as the attendants of the arena approached, they found the kindness came too late;—the heart of the Gaul had been pierced, and his eyes were set in death. It was his life’s blood that flowed so darkly over the sand and sawdust of the arena.

“It is a pity it was so soon over—there was little enough for one’s trouble,” said the widow Fulvia.

“Yes—I have no compassion for Berbix. Any one might have seen that Nobilior did but feint. Mark, they fix the fatal hook to the body—they drag him away to the spoliarium—they scatter new sand over the stage! Pansa regrets nothing more than that he is not rich enough to strew the arena with borax and cinnabar, as Nero used to do.”

“Well, if it has been a brief battle, it is quickly succeeded. See my handsome Lydon on the arena—ay, and the net-bearer too, and the swordsman! Oh, charming!”

There were now on the arena six combatants: Niger and his net, matched against Sporus with his shield and his short broadsword; Lydon and Tetraides, naked save by a cineture round the waist, each armed only with a heavy Greek cestus; and two gladiators from Rome, clad in complete steel, and evenly matched with immense bucklers and pointed swords.

* A little more than £80.

The initiatory contest between Lydon and Tetraides being less deadly than that between the other combatants, no sooner had they advanced to the middle of the arena, than, as by common consent, the rest held back, to see how that contest should be decided, and wait till fiercer weapons might replace the cestus, ere they themselves commenced hostilities. They stood leaning on their arms and apart from each other, gazing on the show, which, if not bloody enough thoroughly to please the populace, they were still inclined to admire, because its origin was of their ancestral Greece.

No persons could, at first glance, have seemed less evenly matched than the two antagonists. Tetraides, though not taller than Lydon, weighed considerably more; the natural size of his muscles was increased, to the eyes of the vulgar, by masses of solid flesh; for, as it was a notion that the contest of the cestus fared easiest with him who was plumpest, Tetraides had encouraged to the utmost his hereditary predisposition to the portly. His shoulders were vast, and his lower limbs thickset, double-jointed, and slightly curved outward, in that formation which takes so much from beauty to give so largely to strength. But Lydon, except that he was slender even almost to meagreness, was beautifully and delicately proportioned; and the skilful might have perceived that, with much less compass of muscle than his foe, that which he had was more seasoned—iron and compact. In proportion, too, as he wanted flesh, he was likely to possess activity; and a haughty smile on his resolute face, which strongly

contrasted the solid heaviness of his enemy's, gave assurance to those who beheld it, and united their hope to their pity : so that, despite the disparity of their seeming strength, the cry of the multitude was nearly as loud for Lydon as for Tetraides.

Whoever is acquainted with the modern prize-ring—whoever has witnessed the heavy and disabling strokes which the human fist, skilfully directed, hath the power to bestow—may easily understand how much that happy facility would be increased by a band carried by thongs of leather round the arm as high as the elbow, and terribly strengthened about the knuckles by a plate of iron, and sometimes a plumpet of lead. Yet this, which was meant to increase, perhaps rather diminished, the interest of the fray : for it necessarily shortened its duration. A very few blows, successfully and scientifically *planted*, might suffice to bring the contest to a close ; and the battle did not, therefore, often allow full scope for the energy, fortitude, and dogged perseverance, that we technically style *pluck*, which not unusually wins the day against superior science, and which heightens to so painful a delight the interest in the battle and the sympathy for the brave.

“Guard thyself!” growled Tetraides, moving nearer and nearer to his foe, who rather shifted round him than receded.

Lydon did not answer, save by a scornful glance of his quick, vigilant eye. Tetraides struck—it was as the blow of a smith on a vice ; Lydon sank suddenly

on one knee—the blow passed over his head. Not so harmless was Lydon's retaliation: he quickly sprung to his feet, and aimed his cestus full on the broad breast of his antagonist. Tetraides reeled—the populace shouted.

"You are unlucky to-day," said Lepidus to Clodius: "you have lost one bet—you will lose another."

"By the gods! my bronzes go to the auctioneer if that is the case. I have no less than a hundred sester tia* upon Tetraides. Ha, ha! see how he rallies! That was a home stroke: he has cut open Lydon's shoulder.—A Tetraides!—a Tetraides!"

"But Lydon is not disheartened. By Pollux! how well he keeps his temper. See how dexterously he avoids those hammer-like hands!—dodging now here, now there—circling round and round. Ah, poor Lydon! he has it again."

"Three to one still on Tetraides! What say you, Lepidus?"

"Well—nine sester tia to three—be it so! What! again, Lydon? He stops—he gasps for breath. By the gods, he is down! No—he is again on his legs. Brave Lydon! Tetraides is encouraged—he laughs loud—he rushes on him."

"Fool!—success blinds him—he should be cautious. Lydon's eye is like a lynx's!" said Clodius, between his teeth.

"Ha, Clodius! saw you that? Your man totters! Another blow—he falls—he falls!"

* Above £800.

"Earth revives him, then. He is once more up; but the blood rolls down his face."

"By the thunderer! Lydon wins it. See how he presses on him! That blow on the temple would have crushed an ox! it *has* crushed Tetraides. He falls again—he cannot move—*habet!*—*habet!*"

"*Habet!*" repeated Pansa. "Take them out and give them the armour and swords."

"Noble editor," said the officers, "we fear that Tetraides will not recover in time; howbeit, we will try."

"Do so."

In a few minutes the officers, who had dragged off the stunned and insensible gladiator, returned with rueful countenances. They feared for his life; he was utterly incapacitated from re-entering the arena.

"In that case," said Pansa, "hold Lydon a *subditius*; and the first gladiator that is vanquished, let Lydon supply his place with the victor."

The people shouted their applause at this sentence; then they again sunk into deep silence. The trumpet sounded loudly. The four combatants stood each against each in prepared and stern array.

"Dost thou recognise the Romans, my Clodius; are they among the celebrated, or are they merely *ordinarii*?"

"Eumolpus is a good second-rate swordsman, my Lepidus. Nepimus, the lesser man, I have never seen before; but he is the son of one of the imperial fiscales,* and brought up in a proper school; doubtless they

* Gladiators maintained by the emperor.

will show sport, but I have no heart for the game ; I cannot win back my money—I am undone. Curses on that Lydon ! who could have supposed he was so dexterous or so lucky ? ”

“ Well, Clodius, shall I take compassion on you, and accept your own terms with these Romans ? ”

“ An even ten sestertia on Eumolpus, then ? ”

“ What ! when Nepimus is untried ? Nay, nay ; that is too bad. ”

“ Well—ten to eight ? ”

“ Agreed. ”

While the contest in the amphitheatre had thus commenced, there was one in the loftier benches for whom it had assumed, indeed, a poignant—a stifling interest. The aged father of Lydon, despite his Christian horror of the spectacle, in his agonised anxiety for his son, had not been able to resist being the spectator of his fate. One amidst a fierce crowd of strangers—the lowest rabble of the populace—the old man saw, felt nothing, but the form—the presence of his brave son ! Not a sound had escaped his lips when twice he had seen him fall to the earth ;—only he had turned paler, and his limbs trembled. But he had uttered one low cry when he saw him victorious ; unconscious, alas ! of the more fearful battle to which that victory was but a prelude.

“ My gallant boy ! ” said he, and wiped his eyes.

“ Is he thy son ? ” said a brawny fellow to the right of the Nazarene ; “ he has fought well : let us see how he does by-and-by. Hark ! he is to fight the first

victor. Now, old boy, pray the gods that that victor be neither of the Romans! nor, next to them, the giant Niger."

The old man sat down again and covered his face. The fray for the moment was indifferent to him—Lydon was not one of the combatants. Yet—yet—the thought flashed across him—the fray was indeed of deadly interest—the first who fell was to make way for Lydon! He started, and bent down, with straining eyes and clasped hands, to view the encounter.

The first interest was attracted towards the combat of Niger with Sporus; for this species of contest, from the fatal result which usually attended it, and from the great science it required in either antagonist, was always peculiarly inviting to the spectators.

They stood at a considerable distance from each other. The singular helmet which Sporus wore (the vizor of which was down) concealed his face; but the features of Niger attracted a fearful and universal interest from their compressed and vigilant ferocity. Thus they stood for some moments, each eyeing each, until Sporus began slowly, and with great caution, to advance, holding his sword pointed, like a modern fencer's, at the breast of his foe. Niger retreated as his antagonist advanced, gathering up his net with his right hand, and never taking his small glittering eye from the movements of the swordsman. Suddenly, when Sporus had approached nearly at arm's length, the retiarius threw himself forward, and cast his net. A quick inflection of body saved the gladiator from the

deadly snare ! he uttered a sharp cry of joy and rage, and rushed upon Niger : but Niger had already drawn in his net, thrown it across his shoulders, and now fled round the lists with a swiftness which the *secutor** in vain endeavoured to equal. The people laughed and shouted aloud, to see the ineffectual efforts of the broad-shouldered gladiator to overtake the flying giant : when, at that moment, their attention was turned from these to the two Roman combatants.

They had placed themselves at the onset face to face, at the distance of modern fencers from each other : but the extreme caution which both evinced at first had prevented any warmth of engagement, and allowed the spectators full leisure to interest themselves in the battle between Sporus and his foe. But the Romans were now heated into full and fierce encounter : they pushed—returned—advanced on—retreated from—each other, with all that careful yet scarcely perceptible caution which characterises men well experienced and equally matched. But at this moment, Eumolpus, the elder gladiator, by that dexterous back-stroke which was considered in the arena so difficult to avoid, had wounded Nepimus in the side. The people shouted ; Lepidus turned pale.

“ Ho ! ” said Clodius, “ the game is nearly over. If Eumolpus fights now the quiet fight, the other will gradually bleed himself away.”

* So called, from the office of that tribe of gladiators, in *following* the foe the moment the net was cast, in order to smite him ere he could have time to rearrange it.

"But, thank the gods! he does *not* fight the backward fight. See!—he presses hard upon Nepimus. By Mars! but Nepimus had him there! the helmet rang again!—Clodius, I shall win!"

"Why do I ever bet but at the dice?" groaned Clodius to himself:—"or why cannot one cog a gladiator?"

"A Sporus!—a Sporus!" shouted the populace, as Niger, having now suddenly paused, had again cast his net, and again unsuccessfully. He had not retreated this time with sufficient agility—the sword of Sporus had inflicted a severe wound upon his right leg; and, incapacitated to fly, he was pressed hard by the fierce swordsman. His great height and length of arm still continued, however, to give him no despicable advantages; and steadily keeping his trident at the front of his foe, he repelled him successfully for several minutes. Sporus now tried, by great rapidity of evolution, to get round his antagonist, who necessarily moved with pain and slowness. In so doing, he lost his caution—he advanced too near to the giant—raised his arm to strike, and received the three points of the fatal spear full in his breast! He sank on his knee. In a moment more, the deadly net was cast over him,—he struggled against its meshes in vain; again—again—again he writhed mutely beneath the fresh strokes of the trident—his blood flowed fast through the net and redly over the sand. He lowered his arms in acknowledgment of defeat.

The conquering retiarius withdrew his net, and lean-

ing on his spear, looked to the audience for their judgment. Slowly, too, at the same moment, the vanquished gladiator rolled his dim and despairing eyes around the theatre. From row to row, from bench to bench, there glared upon him but merciless and unpitying eyes.

Hushed was the roar—the murmur! The silence was dread, for in it was no sympathy; not a hand—no, not even a woman's hand—gave the signal of charity and life! Sporus had never been popular in the arena; and, lately, the interest of the combat had been excited on behalf of the wounded Niger. The people were warmed into blood—the *mimic* fight had ceased to charm; the interest had mounted up to the desire of sacrifice and the thirst of death!

The gladiator felt that his doom was sealed: he uttered no prayer—no groan. The people gave the signal of death! In dogged but agonised submission, he bent his neck to receive the fatal stroke. And now, as the spear of the retiarius was not a weapon to inflict instant and certain death, there stalked into the arena a grim and fatal form, brandishing a short, sharp sword, and with features utterly concealed beneath its vizor. With slow and measured steps, this dismal headsman approached the gladiator, still kneeling—laid the left hand on his humbled crest—drew the edge of the blade across his neck—turned round to the assembly, lest, in the last moment, remorse should come upon them; the dread signal continued the same: the blade glittered

brightly in the air—fell—and the gladiator rolled upon the sand; his limbs quivered—were still,—he was a corpse.*

His body was dragged at once from the arena through the gate of death, and thrown into the gloomy den termed technically the *spoliarium*. And ere it had well reached that destination, the strife between the remaining combatants was decided. The sword of Eumolpus had inflicted the death-wound upon the less experienced combatant. A new victim was added to the receptacle of the slain.

Throughout that mighty assembly there now ran a universal movement; the people breathed more freely, and resettled themselves in their seats. A grateful shower was cast over every row from the concealed conduits. In cool and luxurious pleasure they talked over the late spectacle of blood. Eumolpus removed his helmet, and wiped his brows; his close-curved hair and short beard, his noble Roman features and bright dark eye, attracted the general admiration. He was fresh, unwounded, unfatigued.

The editor paused, and proclaimed aloud that, as Niger's wound disabled him from again entering the arena, Lydon was to be the successor to the slaughtered Nepimus, and the new combatant of Eumolpus.

"Yet, Lydon," added he, "if thou wouldst decline the combat with one so brave and tried, thou mayst

* See the engraving from the friezes of Pompeii, in the work on that city published in the "Library of Entertaining Knowledge," vol. ii. p. 311.

have full liberty to do so. Eumolpus is not the antagonist that was originally decreed for thee. Thou knowest best how far thou canst cope with him. If thou failest, thy doom is honourable death: if thou conquerest, out of my own purse I will double the stipulated prize."

The people shouted applause. Lydon stood in the lists, he gazed around; high above he beheld the pale face, the straining eyes, of his father. He turned away irresolute for a moment. No! the conquest of the cestus was not sufficient—he had not yet won the prize of victory—his father was still a slave!

"Noble edile!" he replied, in a firm and deep tone, "I shrink not from this combat. For the honour of Pompeii, I demand that one trained by its long-celebrated lanista shall do battle with this Roman."

The people shouted louder than before.

"Four to one against Lydon!" said Clodius to Lepidus.

"I would not take twenty to one! Why, Eumolpus is a very Achilles, and this poor fellow is but a *tyro*!"

Eumolpus gazed hard on the face of Lydon; he smiled: yet the smile was followed by a slight and scarce audible sigh—a touch of compassionate emotion, which custom conquered the moment the heart acknowledged it.

And now both, clad in complete armour, the sword drawn, the vizor closed, the two last combatants of the arena (ere man, at least, was matched with beast) stood opposed to each other.

It was just at this time that a letter was delivered to the prætor by one of the attendants of the arena ; he removed the cincture—glanced over it for a moment—his countenance betrayed surprise and embarrassment. He re-read the letter, and then muttering,—“Tush ! it is impossible !—the man must be drunk, even in the morning, to dream of such follies !”—threw it carelessly aside, and gravely settled himself once more in the attitude of attention to the sports.

The interest of the public was wound up very high. Eumolpus had at first won their favour ; but the gallantry of Lydon, and his well-timed allusion to the honour of the Pompeian lanista, had afterwards given the latter the preference in their eyes.

“Holla, old fellow !” said Medon’s neighbour to him. “Your son is hardly matched ; but never fear, the editor will not permit him to be slain—no, nor the people neither ; he has behaved too bravely for that. Ha ! that was a home-thrust !—well averted, by Pollux ! At him again, Lydon !—they stop to breathe ! What art thou muttering, old boy ?”

“Prayers !” answered Medon, with a more calm and hopeful mien than he had yet maintained.

“Prayers !—trifles ! The time for gods to carry a man away in a cloud is gone now. Ha, Jupiter !—what a blow ! Thy side—thy side !—take care of thy side, Lydon !”

There was a convulsive tremor throughout the assembly. A fierce blow from Eumolpus, full on the crest, had brought Lydon to his knee.

"*Habet!*—he has it!" cried a shrill female voice;
"he has it!"

It was the voice of the girl who had so anxiously anticipated the sacrifice of some criminal to the beasts.

"Be silent, child!" said the wife of Pansa, haughtily.
"*Non habet!*—he is *not* wounded!"

"I wish he were, if only to spite old surly Medon," muttered the girl.

Meanwhile Lydon, who had hitherto defended himself with great skill and valour, began to give way before the vigorous assaults of the practised Roman; his arm grew tired, his eye dizzy, he breathed hard and painfully. The combatants paused again for breath.

"Young man," said Eumolpus, in a low voice, "desist; I will wound thee slightly—then lower thy arms; thou hast propitiated the editor and the mob—thou wilt be honourably saved!"

"And my father still enslaved!" groaned Lydon to himself. "No! death or his freedom."

At that thought, and seeing that, his strength not being equal to the endurance of the Roman, everything depended on a sudden and desperate effort, he threw himself fiercely on Eumolpus; the Roman warily retreated—Lydon thrust again—Eumolpus drew himself aside—the sword grazed his cuirass—Lydon's breast was exposed—the Roman plunged his sword through the joints of the armour, not meaning, however, to inflict a deep wound; Lydon, weak and exhausted, fell forward, fell right on the point: it passed through and through, even to the back. Eumolpus

drew forth his blade ; Lydon still made an effort to regain his balance—his sword left his grasp—he struck mechanically at the gladiator with his naked hand, and fell prostrate on the arena. With one accord, editor and assembly made the signal of mercy—the officers of the arena approached—they took off the helmet of the vanquished. He still breathed ; his eyes rolled fiercely on his foe ; the savageness he had acquired in his calling glared from his gaze, and lowered upon the brow darkened already with the shades of death ; then, with a convulsive groan, with a half start, he lifted his eyes above. They rested not on the face of the editor nor on the pitying brows of his relenting judges. He saw them not ; they were as if the vast space was desolate and bare ; one pale agonising face alone was all he recognised—one cry of a broken heart was all that, amidst the murmurs and the shouts of the populace, reached his ear. The ferocity vanished from his brow : a soft, a tender expression of sanctifying but despairing filial love played over his features—played—waned—darkened ! His face suddenly became locked and rigid, resuming its former fierceness. He fell upon the earth.

“Look to him,” said the ædile ; “he has done his duty !”

The officers dragged him off to the spoliarium.

“A true type of glory, and of its fate !” murmured Arbaces to himself ; and his eye, glancing round the amphitheatre, betrayed so much of disdain and scorn, that whoever encountered it felt his breath suddenly

arrested, and his emotions frozen into one sensation of abasement and of awe.

Again rich perfumes were wafted around the theatre ; the attendants sprinkled fresh sand over the arena.

“Bring forth the lion and Glaucus the Athenian,” said the editor.

And a deep and breathless hush of overwrought interest, and intense (yet, strange to say, not unpleasant) terror lay, like a mighty and awful dream, over the assembly.

CHAPTER III.

Sallust and Nydia's Letter.

THRICE had Sallust wakened from his morning sleep, and thrice, recollecting that his friend was that day to perish, had he turned himself with a deep sigh once more to court oblivion. His sole object in life was to avoid pain; and where he could not avoid, at least to forget it.

At length, unable any longer to steep his consciousness in slumber, he raised himself from his incumbent posture, and discovered his favourite freedman sitting by his bedside as usual; for Sallust, who, as I have said, had a gentlemanlike taste for the polite letters, was accustomed to be read to for an hour or so previous to his rising in the morning.

"No books to-day! no more Tibullus! no more Pindar for me! Pindar! alas, alas! the very name recalls those games to which our arena is the savage successor. Has it begun—the amphitheatre? are its rites commenced?"

"Long since, O Sallust! Did you not hear the trumpets and the trampling feet?"

“Ay, ay; but the gods be thanked, I was drowsy, and had only to turn round to fall asleep again.”

“The gladiators must have been long in the ring?”

“The wretches! None of my people have gone to the spectacle?”

“Assuredly not; your orders were too strict.”

“That is well—would the day were over! What is that letter yonder on the table?”

“That! Oh, the letter brought to you last night, when you were too—too——”

“Drunk to read it, I suppose. No matter, it cannot be of much importance.”

“Shall I open it for you, Sallust?”

“Do: anything to divert my thoughts. Poor Glaucus!”

The freedman opened the letter. “What! Greek?” said he; “some learned lady, I suppose.” He glanced over the letter, and for some moments the irregular lines traced by the blind girl’s hand puzzled him. Suddenly, however, his countenance exhibited emotion and surprise. “Good gods! noble Sallust! what have we done not to attend to this before? Hear me read!”

“Nydia, the slave, to Sallust, the friend of Glaucus! I am a prisoner in the house of Arbaces. Hasten to the prætor! procure my release, and we shall yet save Glaucus from the lion. There is another prisoner within these walls, whose witness can exonerate the Athenian from the charge against him;—one who saw the crime—who can prove the criminal in a villain hitherto unsuspected. Fly! hasten! quick! quick!

Bring with you armed men, lest resistance be made,—and a cunning and dexterous smith; for the dungeon of my fellow-prisoner is thick and strong. Oh! by thy right hand, and thy father's ashes, lose not a moment!”

“Great Jove!” exclaimed Sallust, starting, “and this day—nay, within this hour, perhaps he dies. What is to be done? I will instantly to the prætor.”

“Nay; not so. The prætor (as well as Pansa, the editor himself) is the creature of the mob; and the mob will not hear of delay; they will not be balked in the very moment of expectation. Besides, the publicity of the appeal would forewarn the cunning Egyptian. It is evident that he has some interest in these concealments. No; fortunately thy slaves are in thy house.”

“I seize thy meaning,” interrupted Sallust; “arm the slaves instantly. The streets are empty. We will ourselves hasten to the house of Arbaces, and release the prisoners. Quick! quick! What ho! Davus there! My gown and sandals, the papyrus and a reed.* I will write to the prætor, to beseech him to delay the sentence of Glaucus, for that, within an hour, we may yet prove him innocent. So, so; that is well. Hasten with this, Davus, to the prætor, at the amphitheatre. See it given to his own hand. Now then, O ye gods! whose providence Epicurus denied, befriend me, and I will call Epicurus a liar!”

* The reed (*calamus*) was used for writing on papyrus and parchment; the stilus for writing on waxen tablets, plates of metal, &c. Letters were written sometimes on tablets, sometimes on papyrus.

CHAPTER IV.

The Amphitheatre once more.

GLAUCUS and Olinthus had been placed together in that gloomy and narrow cell in which the criminals of the arena awaited their last and fearful struggle. Their eyes, of late accustomed to the darkness, scanned the faces of each other in this awful hour, and by that dim light, the paleness, which chased away the natural hues from either cheek, assumed a yet more ashy and ghastly whiteness. Yet their brows were erect and dauntless—their limbs did not tremble—their lips were compressed and rigid. The religion of the one, the pride of the other, the conscious innocence of both, and it may be the support derived from their mutual companionship, elevated the victim into the hero.

“Hark! hearest thou that shout? They are growling over their human blood,” said Olinthus.

“I hear; my heart grows sick; but the gods support me.”

“The gods! O rash young man! in this hour recognise only the One God. Have I not taught thee

in the dungeon, wept for thee, prayed for thee?—in my zeal and in my agony, have I not thought more of thy salvation than my own?”

“Brave friend!” answered Glaucus, solemnly, “I have listened to thee with awe, with wonder, and with a secret tendency towards conviction. Had our lives been spared, I might gradually have weaned myself from the tenets of my own faith, and inclined to thine; but, in this last hour, it were a craven thing, and a base, to yield to hasty terror what should only be the result of lengthened meditation. Were I to embrace thy creed, and cast down my father’s gods, should I not be bribed by thy promise of heaven, or awed by thy threats of hell? Olinthus, no! Think we of each other with equal charity—I honouring thy sincerity—thou pitying my blindness or my obdurate courage. As have been my deeds, such will be my reward; and the Power or Powers above will not judge harshly of human error, when it is linked with honesty of purpose and truth of heart. Speak we no more of this. Hush! Dost thou hear them drag yon heavy body through the passage? Such as that clay will be ours soon.”

“O Heaven! O Christ! already I behold ye!” cried the fervent Olinthus, lifting up his hands; “I tremble not—I rejoice that the prison-house will be soon broken.”

Glaucus bowed his head in silence. He felt the distinction between his fortitude and that of his fellow-sufferer. The heathen did not tremble; but the Christian exulted.

The door swung gratingly back—the gleam of spears shot along the walls.

“Glaucus the Athenian, thy time has come,” said a loud and clear voice ; “the lion awaits thee.”

“I am ready,” said the Athenian. “Brother and co-mate, one last embrace ! Bless me—and, farewell !”

The Christian opened his arms—he clasped the young heathen to his breast—he kissed his forehead and cheek—he sobbed aloud—his tears flowed fast and hot over the features of his new friend.

“Oh ! could I have converted thee, I had not wept. Oh ! that I might say to thee, ‘We two shall sup this night in Paradise !’”

“It may be so yet,” answered the Greek, with a tremulous voice. “They whom death part not, may meet yet beyond the grave : on the earth—on the beautiful, the beloved earth, farewell for ever !—Worthy officer, I attend you.”

Glaucus tore himself away ; and when he came forth into the air, its breath, which, though sunless, was hot and arid, smote witheringly upon him. His frame, not yet restored from the effects of the deadly draught, shrank and trembled. The officers supported him.

“Courage !” said one ; “thou art young, active, well knit. They give thee a weapon ! despair not, and thou mayst yet conquer.”

Glaucus did not reply ; but, ashamed of his infirmity, he made a desperate and convulsive effort, and regained the firmness of his nerves. They anointed his body, completely naked save by a cincture round the loins,

placed the stilus (vain weapon !) in his hand, and led him into the arena.

And now when the Greek saw the eyes of thousands and tens of thousands upon him, he no longer felt that he was mortal. All evidence of fear—all fear itself—was gone. A red and haughty flush spread over the paleness of his features—he towered aloft to the full of his glorious stature. In the elastic beauty of his limbs and form, in his intent but unfrowning brow, in the high disdain, and in the indomitable soul, which breathed visibly, which spoke audibly, from his attitude, his lip, his eye,—he seemed the very incarnation, vivid and corporeal, of the valour of his land—of the divinity of its worship—at once a hero and a god !

The murmur of hatred and horror at his crime, which had greeted his entrance, died into the silence of involuntary admiration and half-compassionate respect ; and, with a quick and convulsive sigh, that seemed to move the whole mass of life as if it were one body, the gaze of the spectators turned from the Athenian to a dark uncouth object in the centre of the arena. It was the grated den of the lion !

“By Venus, how warm it is !” said Fulvia ; “yet there is no sun. Would that those stupid sailors* could have fastened up that gap in the awning !”

“Oh ! it is warm, indeed. I turn sick—I faint !” said the wife of Pansa ; even her experienced stoicism giving way at the struggle about to take place.

* Sailors were generally employed in fastening the *velaria* of the amphitheatre.

The lion had been kept without food for twenty-four hours, and the animal had, during the whole morning, testified a singular and restless uneasiness, which the keeper had attributed to the pangs of hunger. Yet its bearing seemed rather that of fear than of rage ; its roar was painful and distressed ; it hung its head—snuffed the air through the bars—then lay down—started again—and again uttered its wild and far-resounding cries. And now, in its den, it lay utterly dumb and mute, with distended nostrils forced hard against the grating, and disturbing, with a heaving breath, the sand below on the arena.

The editor's lip quivered, and his cheek grew pale ; he looked anxiously around—hesitated—delayed ; the crowd became impatient. Slowly he gave the sign ; the keeper, who was behind the den, cautiously removed the grating, and the lion leaped forth with a mighty and glad roar of release. The keeper hastily retreated through the grated passage leading from the arena, and left the lord of the forest—and his prey.

Glaucus had bent his limbs so as to give himself the firmest posture at the expected rush of the lion, with his small and shining weapon raised on high, in the faint hope that *one* well-directed thrust (for he knew that he should have time but for *one*) might penetrate through the eye to the brain of his grim foe.

But, to the unutterable astonishment of all, the beast seemed not even aware of the presence of the criminal.

At the first moment of its release it halted abruptly

in the arena, raised itself half on end, snuffing the upward air with impatient sighs ; then suddenly it sprang forward, but not on the Athenian. At half-speed it circled round and round the space, turning its vast head from side to side with an anxious and perturbed gaze, as if seeking only some avenue of escape ; once or twice it endeavoured to leap up the parapet that divided it from the audience, and, on failing, uttered rather a baffled howl than its deep-toned and kingly roar. It evinced no sign, either of wrath or hunger ; its tail drooped along the sand, instead of lashing its gaunt sides ; and its eye, though it wandered at times to Glaucus, rolled again listlessly from him. At length, as if tired of attempting to escape, it crept with a moan into its cage, and once more laid itself down to rest.

The first surprise of the assembly at the apathy of the lion soon grew converted into resentment at its cowardice ; and the populace already merged their pity for the fate of Glaucus into angry compassion for their own disappointment.

The editor called to the keeper.

“How is this? Take the goad, prick him forth, and then close the door of the den.”

As the keeper, with some fear, but more astonishment, was preparing to obey, a loud cry was heard at one of the entrances of the arena ; there was a confusion, a bustle — voices of remonstrance suddenly breaking forth, and suddenly silenced at the reply. All eyes turned, in wonder at the interruption, towards the quarter of the disturbance ; the crowd gave

way, and suddenly Sallust appeared on the senatorial benches, his hair dishevelled—breathless—heated—half-exhausted. He cast his eyes hastily round the ring. “Remove the Athenian!” he cried; “haste—he is innocent! Arrest Arbaces the Egyptian—he is the murderer of Apæcides!”

“Art thou mad, O Sallust!” said the prætor, rising from his seat. “What means this raving?”

“Remove the Athenian!—Quick! or his blood be on your head. Prætor, delay, and you answer with your own life to the emperor! I bring with me the eyewitness to the death of the priest Apæcides. Room there!—stand back!—give way! People of Pompeii, fix every eye upon Arbaces—there he sits! Room there for the priest Calenus!”

Pale, haggard, fresh from the jaws of famine and of death, his face fallen, his eyes dull as a vulture’s, his broad frame gaunt as a skeleton,—Calenus was supported into the very row in which Arbaces sat. His releasers had given him sparingly of food; but the chief sustenance that nerved his feeble limbs was revenge!

“The priest Calenus!—Calenus!” cried the mob. “Is it he? No—it is a dead man!”

“It is the priest Calenus,” said the prætor, gravely. “What hast thou to say?”

“Arbaces of Egypt is the murderer of Apæcides, the priest of Isis; these eyes saw him deal the blow. It is from the dungeon into which he plunged me—it is

from the darkness and horror of a death by famine—that the gods have raised me to proclaim his crime ! Release the Athenian—*he* is innocent !”

“It is for this, then, that the lion spared him.—A miracle ! a miracle !” cried Pansa.

“A miracle ! a miracle !” shouted the people ; “remove the Athenian—*Arbaces to the lion !*”

And that shout echoed from hill to vale—from coast to sea—“*Arbaces to the lion !*”

“Officers, remove the accused Glaucus—remove, but guard him yet,” said the prætor. “The gods lavish their wonders upon this day.”

As the prætor gave the word of release, there was a cry of joy—a female voice—a child’s voice—and it was of joy ! It rang through the heart of the assembly with electric force—it was touching, it was holy, that child’s voice ! And the populace echoed it back with sympathising congratulation !

“Silence !” said the grave prætor—“who is there ?”

“The blind girl—Nydia,” answered Sallust ; “it is her hand that has raised Calenus from the grave, and delivered Glaucus from the lion.”

“Of this hereafter,” said the prætor. “Calenus, priest of Isis, thou accusest Arbaces of the murder of Apæcides ?”

“I do !”

“Thou didst behold the deed ?”

“Prætor—with these eyes——”

“Enough at present—the details must be reserved for more suiting time and place. Arbaces of Egypt,

thou hearest the charge against thee—thou hast not yet spoken—what hast thou to say?"

The gaze of the crowd had been long riveted on Arbaces, but not until the confusion which he had betrayed at the first charge of Sallust and the entrance of Calenus had subsided. At the shout, "Arbaces to the lion!" he had indeed trembled, and the dark bronze of his cheek had taken a paler hue. But he had soon recovered his haughtiness and self-control. Proudly he returned the angry glare of the countless eyes around him; and replying now to the question of the prætor, he said, in that accent so peculiarly tranquil and commanding, which characterised his tones,—

"Prætor, this charge is so mad that it scarcely deserves reply. My first accuser is the noble Sallust—the most intimate friend of Glaucus! my second is a priest; I revere his garb and calling—but, people of Pompeii! ye know somewhat of the character of Calenus—he is griping and gold-thirsty to a proverb; the witness of such men is to be bought! Prætor, I am innocent!"

"Sallust," said the magistrate, "where found you Calenus!"

"In the dungeons of Arbaces."

"Egyptian," said the prætor, frowning, "thou didst, then, dare to imprison a priest of the gods—and wherefore?"

"Hear me," answered Arbaces, rising calmly, but with agitation visible in his face. "This man came to threaten that he would make against me the charge he

has now made, unless I would purchase his silence with half my fortune : I remonstrated—in vain. Peace there—let not the priest interrupt me ! Noble prætor—and ye, O people ! I was a stranger in the land—I knew myself innocent of crime—but the witness of a priest against me might yet destroy me. In my perplexity I decoyed him to the cell whence he has been released, on pretence that it was the coffer-house of my gold. I resolved to detain him there until the fate of the true criminal was sealed, and his threats could avail no longer ; but I meant no worse. I may have erred—but who amongst ye will not acknowledge the equity of self-preservation ? Were I guilty, why was the witness of this priest silent at the trial ?—*then* I had not detained or concealed him. Why did he not proclaim my guilt when I proclaimed that of Glaucus ? Prætor, this needs an answer. For the rest, I throw myself on your laws. I demand their protection. Remove hence the accused and the accuser. I will willingly meet, and cheerfully abide by, the decision of the legitimate tribunal. This is no place for further parley.”

“He says right,” said the prætor “Ho ! guards—remove Arbaces—guard Calenus ! Sallust, we hold you responsible for your accusation. Let the sports be resumed.”

“What !” cried Calenus, turning round to the people, “shall Isis be thus contemned ? Shall the blood of Apæcides yet cry for vengeance ? Shall justice be delayed now, that it may be frustrated here-

after? Shall the lion be cheated of his lawful prey! A god! a god!—I feel the god rush to my lips! *To the lion—to the lion with Arbaces!*”

His exhausted frame could support no longer the ferocious malice of the priest; he sank on the ground in strong convulsions—the foam gathered to his mouth—he was as a man, indeed, whom a supernatural power had entered! The people saw, and shuddered.

“It is a god that inspires the holy man!—*To the lion with the Egyptian!*”

With that cry up sprang—on moved—thousands upon thousands! They rushed from the heights—they poured down in the direction of the Egyptian. In vain did the ædile command—in vain did the prætor lift his voice and proclaim the law. The people had been already rendered savage by the exhibition of blood—they thirsted for more—their superstition was aided by their ferocity. Aroused—inflamed by the spectacle of their victims, they forgot the authority of their rulers. It was one of those dread popular convulsions common to crowds wholly ignorant, half free and half servile; and which the peculiar constitution of the Roman provinces so frequently exhibited. The power of the prætor was as a reed beneath the whirlwind; still, at his word, the guards had drawn themselves along the lower benches, on which the upper classes sat separate from the vulgar. They made but a feeble barrier—the waves of the human sea halted for a moment, to enable Arbaces to count the exact moment of his doom! In despair, and in a terror

which beat down even pride, he glanced his eyes over the rolling and rushing crowd—when, right above them, through the wide chasm which had been left in the velaria, he beheld a strange and awful apparition—he beheld—and his craft restored his courage !

He stretched his hand on high ; over his lofty brow and royal features there came an expression of unutterable solemnity and command.

“Behold !” he shouted with a voice of thunder, which stilled the roar of the crowd ; “behold how the gods protect the guiltless ! The fires of the avenging Orcus burst forth against the false witness of my accusers !”

The eyes of the crowd followed the gesture of the Egyptian, and beheld, with ineffable dismay, a vast vapour shooting from the summit of Vesuvius, in the form of a gigantic pine-tree ;* the trunk, blackness—the branches, fire !—a fire that shifted and wavered in its hues with every moment, now fiercely luminous, now of a dull and dying red, that again blazed terrifically forth with intolerable glare !

There was a dead, heart-sunken silence—through which there suddenly broke the roar of the lion, which was echoed back from within the building by the sharper and fiercer yells of its fellow-beast. Dread seers were they of the Burden of the Atmosphere, and wild prophets of the wrath to come !

Then there arose on high the universal shrieks of women ; the men stared at each other, but were dumb.

* Pliny.

At that moment they felt the earth shake beneath their feet; the walls of the theatre trembled: and, beyond in the distance, they heard the crash of falling roofs; an instant more, and the mountain-cloud seemed to roll towards them, dark and rapid, like a torrent; at the same time it cast forth from its bosom a shower of ashes mixed with vast fragments of burning stone! Over the crushing vines—over the desolate streets—over the amphitheatre itself—far and wide—with many a mighty splash in the agitated sea—fell that awful shower!

No longer thought the crowd of justice or of Arbaces; safety for themselves was their sole thought. Each turned to fly—each dashing, pressing, crushing, against the other. Trampling recklessly over the fallen—amidst groans, and oaths, and prayers, and sudden shrieks, the enormous crowd vomited itself forth through the numerous passages. Whither should they fly? Some, anticipating a second earthquake, hastened to their homes to load themselves with their more costly goods, and escape while it was yet time; others, dreading the showers of ashes that now fell fast, torrent upon torrent, over the streets, rushed under the roofs of the nearest houses, or temples, or sheds—shelter of any kind—for protection from the terrors of the open air. But darker, and larger, and mightier, spread the cloud above them. It was a sudden and more ghastly Night rushing upon the realm of Noon!

CHAPTER V.

The Cell of the Prisoner and the Den of the Dead—
Grief unconscious of Horror.

STUNNED by his reprieve, doubting that he was awake, Glaucus had been led by the officers of the arena into a small cell within the walls of the theatre. They threw a loose robe over his form, and crowded round in congratulation and wonder. There was an impatient and fretful cry without the cell; the throng gave way, and the blind girl, led by some gentler hand, flung herself at the feet of Glaucus.

“It is *I* who have saved thee!” she sobbed; “now let me die!”

“Nydia, my child!—my preserver!”

“Oh, let me feel thy touch—thy breath! Yes, yes, thou livest! We are not too late! That dread door, methought it would never yield! and Calenus!—oh, his voice was as the dying wind among tombs:—we had to wait—gods! it seemed hours ere food and wine restored to him something of strength. But thou livest! thou livest yet! And I—*I* have saved thee!”

This affecting scene was soon interrupted by the event just described.

"The mountain ! the earthquake !" resounded from side to side. The officers fled with the rest ; they left Glaucus and Nydia to save themselves as they might.

As the sense of the dangers around them flashed on the Athenian, his generous heart recurred to Olinthus. He, too, was reprieved from the tiger by the hand of the gods ; should he be left to a no less fatal death in the neighbouring cell ? Taking Nydia by the hand, Glaucus hurried across the passages ; he gained the den of the Christian. He found Olinthus kneeling, and in prayer.

"Arise ! arise ! my friend !" he cried. "Save thyself, and fly ! See ! Nature is thy dread deliverer !" He led forth the bewildered Christian, and pointed to a cloud which advanced darker and darker, disgorging forth showers of ashes and pumice-stones, and bade him hearken to the cries and trampling rush of the scattered crowd.

"This is the hand of God—God be praised !" said Olinthus, devoutly.

"Fly ! seek thy brethren ! Concert with them thy escape. Farewell !"

Olinthus did not answer, neither did he mark the retreating form of his friend. High thoughts and solemn absorbed his soul ; and in the enthusiasm of his kindling heart, he exulted in the mercy of God rather than trembled at the evidence of His power.

At length he roused himself, and hurried on, he scarce knew whither.

The open doors of a dark, desolate cell suddenly

appeared on his path ; through the gloom within there flared and flickered a single lamp ; and by its light he saw three grim and naked forms stretched on the earth in death. His feet were suddenly arrested ; for, amidst the terrors of that drear recess—the spoliarium of the arena—he heard a low voice calling on the name of Christ !

He could not resist lingering at that appeal ; he entered the den, and his feet were dabbled in the slow streams of blood that gushed from the corpses over the sand.

“ Who,” said the Nazarene, “ calls upon the Son of God ? ”

No answer came forth ; and turning round, Olinthus beheld, by the light of the lamp, an old grey-headed man sitting on the floor, and supporting in his lap the head of one of the dead. The features of the dead man were firmly and rigidly locked in the last sleep ; but over the lip there played a fierce smile—not the Christian’s smile of hope, but the dark sneer of hatred and defiance. Yet on the face still lingered the beautiful roundness of early youth. The hair curled thick and glossy over the unwrinkled brow ; and the down of manhood but slightly shaded the marble of the hueless cheek. And over this face bent one of such unutterable sadness—of such yearning tenderness—of such fond, and such deep despair ! The tears of the old man fell fast and hot, but he did not feel them ; and when his lips moved, and he mechanically uttered the prayer of his benign and hopeful faith, neither his

heart nor his sense responded to the words ; it was but the involuntary emotion that broke from the lethargy of his mind. His boy was dead, and had died for him !—and the old man's heart was broken !

“Medon !” said Olinthus, pityingly, “arise, and fly ! God is forth upon the wings of the elements ! The New Gomorrah is doomed !—Fly, ere the fires consume thee !”

“He was ever so full of life !—he *cannot* be dead ! Come hither !—place your hand on his heart !—sure it beats yet ?”

“Brother, the soul has fled !—we will remember it in our prayers ! Thou canst not reanimate the dumb clay ! Come, come—hark ! while I speak, yon crashing walls !—hark ! yon agonising cries ! Not a moment is to be lost !—Come !”

“I hear nothing !” said Medon, shaking his grey hair. “The poor boy, his love murdered him !”

“Come ! come ! forgive this friendly force.”

“What ! Who would sever the father from the son ?” And Medon clasped the body tightly in his embrace, and covered it with passionate kisses. “Go !” said he, lifting up his face for one moment. “Go ! we must be alone !”

“Alas !” said the compassionate Nazarene, “Death hath severed ye already !”

The old man smiled very calmly. “No, no, no !” he muttered, his voice growing lower with each word, “Death has been more kind !”

With that his head drooped on his son's breast—his

arms relaxed their grasp. Olinthus caught him by the hand—the pulse had ceased to beat! The last words of the father were the words of truth—*Death had been more kind!*

Meanwhile Glaucus and Nydia were pacing swiftly up the perilous and fearful streets. The Athenian had learned from his preserver that Ione was yet in the house of Arbaces. Thither he fled, to release—to save her! The few slaves whom the Egyptian had left at his mansion when he had repaired in long procession to the amphitheatre, had been able to offer no resistance to the armed band of Sallust; and when afterwards the volcano broke forth, they had huddled together, stunned and frightened, in the inmost recesses of the house. Even the tall Ethiopian had forsaken his post at the door; and Glaucus (who left Nydia without—the poor Nydia, jealous once more, even in such an hour!) passed on through the vast hall without meeting one from whom to learn the chamber of Ione. Even as he passed, however, the darkness that covered the heavens increased so rapidly, that it was with difficulty he could guide his steps. The flower-wreathed columns seemed to reel and tremble; and with every instant he heard the ashes fall cranchingly into the roofless peristyle. He ascended to the upper rooms—breathless he paced along, shouting out aloud the name of Ione; and at length he heard, at the end of a gallery, a voice—*her* voice, in wondering reply! To rush forward—to shatter the door—to seize Ione in his arms—to hurry from the mansion—seemed to him

the work of an instant! Scarcely had he gained the spot where Nydia was, than he heard steps advancing towards the house, and recognised the voice of Arbaces, who had returned to seek his wealth and Ione ere he fled from the doomed Pompeii. But so dense was already the reeking atmosphere, that the foes saw not each other, though so near—save that, dimly in the gloom, Glaucus caught the moving outline of the snowy robes of the Egyptian.

They hastened onward—those three! Alas!—whither? They now saw not a step before them—the blackness became utter. They were encompassed with doubt and horror!—and the death he had escaped seemed to Glaucus only to have changed its form and augmented its victims.

CHAPTER VI.

Calenus and Burbo—Diomed and Clodius—The Girl of the Amphitheatre and Julia.

THE sudden catastrophe which had, as it were, riven the very bonds of society, and left prisoner and jailer alike free, had soon rid Calenus of the guards to whose care the prætor had consigned him. And when the darkness and the crowd separated the priest from his attendants, he hastened with trembling steps towards the temple of his goddess. As he crept along, and ere the darkness was complete, he felt himself suddenly caught by the robe, and a voice muttered in his ear,—

“Hist!—Calenus!—an awful hour!”

“Ay! by my father’s head! Who art thou?—thy face is dim, and thy voice is strange!”

“Not know thy Burbo?—fie!”

“Gods!—how the darkness gathers! Ho, ho;—by yon terrific mountain, what sudden blazes of lightning!*—How they dart and quiver! Hades is loosed on earth!”

* Volcanic lightnings. These phenomena were especially the characteristic of the long subsequent eruption of 1779, and their evidence is visible in the tokens of that more awful one, now so imperfectly described.

“Tush!—thou believest not these things, Calenus! Now is the time to make our fortune!”

“Ha!”

“Listen! Thy temple is full of gold and precious mummeries!—let us load ourselves with them, and then hasten to the sea and embark! None will ever ask an account of the doings of this day.”

“Burbo, thou art right! Hush! and follow me into the temple. Who cares now—who sees now—whether thou art a priest or not? Follow, and we will share.”

In the precincts of the temple were many priests gathered round the altars, praying, weeping, groveling in the dust. Impostors in safety, they were not the less superstitious in danger! Calenus passed them, and entered the chamber yet to be seen in the south side of the court. Burbo followed him—the priest struck a light. Wine and viands strewed the table—the remains of a sacrificial feast.

“A man who has hungered forty-eight hours,” muttered Calenus, “has an appetite even in such a time.” He seized on the food, and devoured it greedily. Nothing could, perhaps, be more unnaturally horrid than the selfish baseness of these villains; for there is nothing more loathsome than the valour of avarice. Plunder and sacrilege while the pillars of the world tottered to and fro! What an increase to the terrors of nature can be made by the vices of man!

“Wilt thou never have done?” said Burbo, impa-

tiently ; “thy face purples and thine eyes start already.”

“It is not every day one has such a right to be hungry. Oh, Jupiter ! what sound is that?—the hissing of fiery water ! What ! does the cloud give rain as well as flame ? Ha !—what ! shrieks ? And, Burbo, how silent all is now ! Look forth !”

Amidst the other horrors, the mighty mountain now cast up columns of boiling water. Blent and kneaded with the half-burning ashes, the streams fell like seething mud over the streets in frequent intervals. And full, where the priests of Isis had now covered around the altars, on which they had vainly sought to kindle fires and pour incense, one of the fiercest of those deadly torrents, mingled with immense fragments of scoria, had poured its rage. Over the bended forms of the priests it dashed : that cry had been of death—that silence had been of eternity ! The ashes—the pitchy stream—sprinkled the altars, covered the pavement, and half concealed the quivering corpses of the priests !

“They are dead,” said Burbo, terrified for the first time, and hurrying back into the cell. “I thought not the danger was so near and fatal.”

The two wretches stood staring at each other—you might have heard their hearts beat ! Calenus, the less bold by nature, but the more griping, recovered first.

“We must to our task, and away !” he said, in a low whisper, frightened at his own voice. He stepped to the threshold, paused, crossed over the heated floor

and his dead brethren to the sacred chapel, and called to Burbo to follow. But the gladiator quaked, and drew back.

“So much the better,” thought Calenus; “the more will be *my* booty.” Hastily he loaded himself with the more portable treasures of the temple; and thinking no more of his comrade, hurried from the sacred place. A sudden flash of lightning from the mount showed to Burbo, who stood motionless at the threshold, the flying and laden form of the priest. He took heart; he stepped forth to join him, when a tremendous shower of ashes fell right before his feet. The gladiator shrank back once more. Darkness closed him in. But the shower continued fast—fast; its heaps rose high and suffocatingly—deathly vapours steamed from them. The wretch gasped for breath—he sought in despair again to fly—the ashes had blocked up the threshold—he shrieked as his feet shrank from the boiling fluid. How could he escape? he could not climb to the open space; nay, were he able, he could not brave its horrors. It were best to remain in the cell, protected, at least, from the fatal air. He sat down and clenched his teeth. By degrees, the atmosphere from without—stifling and venomous—crept into the chamber. He could endure it no longer. His eyes, glaring round, rested on a sacrificial axe which some priest had left in the chamber: he seized it. With the desperate strength of his gigantic arm, he attempted to hew his way through the walls.

Meanwhile the streets were already thinned; the crowd had hastened to disperse itself under shelter; the ashes began to fill up the lower parts of the town; but, here and there, you heard the steps of fugitives cranching them warily, or saw their pale and haggard faces by the blue glare of the lightning, or the more unsteady glare of torches, by which they endeavoured to steer their steps. But ever and anon, the boiling water, or the straggling ashes, mysterious and gusty winds, rising and dying in a breath, extinguished these wandering lights, and with them the last living hope of those who bore them.

In the street that leads to the gate of Herculaneum, Clodius now bent his perplexed and doubtful way. "If I can gain the open country," thought he, "doubtless there will be various vehicles beyond the gate, and Herculaneum is not far distant. Thank Mercury! I have little to lose, and that little is about me!"

"Holla!—help there—help!" cried a querulous and frightened voice. "I have fallen down—my torch has gone out—my slaves have deserted me. I am Diomed—the rich Diomed;—ten thousand sesterces to him who helps me!"

At the same moment, Clodius felt himself caught by the feet. "Ill fortune to thee,—let me go, fool!" said the gambler.

"Oh, help me up!—give me thy hand!"

"There—rise!"

"Is this Clodius? I know the voice! Whither fliest thou?"

“Towards Herculaneum.”

“Blessed be the gods! our way is the same, then, as far as the gate. Why not take refuge in my villa? Thou knowest the long range of subterranean cellars beneath the basement,—that shelter, what shower can penetrate?”

“You speak well,” said Clodius, musingly. “And by storing the cellar with food, we can remain there even some days, should these wondrous storms endure so long.”

“Oh, blessed be he who invented gates to a city!” cried Diomed. “See!—they have placed a light within you arch: by that let us guide our steps.”

The air was now still for a few minutes: the lamp from the gate streamed out far and clear: the fugitives hurried on—they gained the gate—they passed by the Roman sentry; the lightning flashed over his livid face and polished helmet, but his stern features were composed even in their awe! He remained erect and motionless at his post. That hour itself had not animated the machine of the ruthless majesty of Rome into the reasoning and self-acting man. There he stood amidst the crashing elements: he had not received the permission to desert his station and escape.*

Diomed and his companion hurried on, when suddenly a female form rushed athwart their way. It was the girl whose ominous voice had been raised so often and so gladly in anticipation of “the merry show!”

* The skeletons of more than one sentry were found at their posts.

"Oh, Diomed!" she cried, "shelter! shelter! See"—pointing to an infant clasped to her breast—"see this little one!—it is mine!—the child of shame! I have never owned it till this hour. But *now* I remember I am a mother! I have plucked it from the cradle of its nurse: *she* had fled! Who could think of the babe in such an hour but she who bore it? Save it! save it!"

"Curses on thy shrill voice! Away, harlot!" muttered Clodius between his ground teeth.

"Nay, girl," said the more humane Diomed; "follow if thou wilt. This way—this way—to the vaults!"

They hurried on—they arrived at the house of Diomed—they laughed aloud as they crossed the threshold, for they deemed the danger over.

Diomed ordered his slaves to carry down into the subterranean gallery, before described, a profusion of food, and oil for lights; and there Julia, Clodius, the mother and her babe, the greater part of the slaves, and some frightened visitors and clients of the neighbourhood, sought their shelter.

CHAPTER VII.

The Progress of the Destruction.

THE cloud, which had scattered so deep a murkiness over the day, had now settled into a solid and impenetrable mass. It resembled less even the thickest gloom of a night in the open air than the close and blind darkness of some narrow room.* But in proportion as the blackness gathered, did the lightnings around Vesuvius increase in their vivid and scorching glare. Nor was their horrible beauty confined to the usual hues of fire; no rainbow ever rivalled their varying and prodigal dyes. Now brightly blue as the most azure depth of a southern sky—now of a livid and snakelike green, darting restlessly to and fro as the folds of an enormous serpent—now of a lurid and intolerable crimson, gushing forth through the columns of smoke, far and wide, and lighting up the whole city from arch to arch,—then suddenly dying into a sickly paleness, like the ghost of their own life!

In the pauses of the showers you heard the rumbling of the earth beneath, and the groaning waves of the tortured sea; or, lower still, and audible but to the

* Pliny.

watch of intensest fear, the grinding and hissing murmur of the escaping gases through the chasms of the distant mountain. Sometimes the cloud appeared to break from its solid mass, and, by the lightning, to assume quaint and vast mimeries of human or of monster shapes, striding across the gloom, hurtling one upon the other, and vanishing swiftly into the turbulent abyss of shade; so that, to the eyes and fancies of the affrighted wanderers, the unsubstantial vapours were as the bodily forms of gigantic foes,—the agents of terror and of death.*

The ashes in many places were already knee-deep; and the boiling showers which came from the steaming breath of the volcano forced their way into the houses, bearing with them a strong and suffocating vapour. In some places, immense fragments of rock, hurled upon the house-roofs, bore down along the streets masses of confused ruin, which yet more and more, with every hour, obstructed the way; and, as the day advanced, the motion of the earth was more sensibly felt—the footing seemed to slide and creep—nor could chariot or litter be kept steady even on the most level ground.

Sometimes the huger stones, striking against each other as they fell, broke into countless fragments, emitting sparks of fire, which caught whatever was combustible within their reach; and along the plains beyond the city the darkness was now terribly relieved, for several houses, and even vineyards, had been set on

* Dion Cassius.

flames ; and at various intervals, the fires rose sullenly and fiercely against the solid gloom. To add to this partial relief of the darkness, the citizens had, here and there, in the more public places, such as the porticos of temples and the entrances to the forum, endeavoured to place rows of torches ; but these rarely continued long ; the showers and the winds extinguished them, and the sudden darkness into which their sudden birth was converted had something in it doubly terrible and doubly impressing on the impotence of human hopes, the lesson of despair.

Frequently, by the momentary light of these torches, parties of fugitives encountered each other, some hurrying towards the sea, others flying from the sea back to the land ; for the ocean had retreated rapidly from the shore—an utter darkness lay over it, and upon its groaning and tossing waves the storm of cinders and rock fell without the protection which the streets and roofs afforded to the land. Wild—haggard—ghastly with supernatural fears, these groups encountered each other, but without the leisure to speak, to consult, to advise ; for the showers fell now frequently, though not continuously, extinguishing the lights, which showed to each band the deathlike faces of the other, and hurrying all to seek refuge beneath the nearest shelter. The whole elements of civilisation were broken up. Ever and anon, by the flickering lights, you saw the thief hastening by the most solemn authorities of the law, laden with, and fearfully chuckling over, the produce of his sudden gains. If, in the darkness, wife was

separated from husband, or parent from child, vain was the hope of reunion. Each hurried blindly and confusedly on. Nothing in all the various and complicated machinery of social life was left save the primal law of self-preservation.

Through this awful scene did the Athenian wade his way, accompanied by Ione and the blind girl. Suddenly, a rush of hundreds, in their path to the sea, swept by them. Nydia was torn from the side of Glaucus, who, with Ione, was borne rapidly onward; and when the crowd (whose forms they saw not, so thick was the gloom) were gone, Nydia was still separated from their side. Glaucus shouted her name. No answer came. They retraced their steps—in vain: they could not discover her—it was evident she had been swept along some opposite direction by the human current. Their friend, their preserver, was lost! And hitherto Nydia had been their guide. *Her blindness rendered the scene familiar to her alone.* Accustomed, through a perpetual night, to thread the windings of the city, she had led them unerringly towards the sea-shore, by which they had resolved to hazard an escape. Now, which way could they wend? all was rayless to them—a maze without a clue. Wearied, despondent, bewildered, they, however, passed along, the ashes falling upon their heads, the fragmentary stones dashing up in sparkles before their feet.

“Alas! alas!” murmured Ione, “I can go no farther; my steps sink among the scorching cinders. Fly, dearest!—beloved, fly! and leave me to my fate!”

“Hush, my betrothed ! my bride ! Death with thee is sweeter than life without thee ! yet, whither—oh ! whither, can we direct ourselves through the gloom ? Already it seems that we have made but a circle, and are in the very spot which we quitted an hour ago.”

“O gods ! yon rock—see, it hath riven the roof before us ! It is death to move through the streets !”

“Blessed lightning ! See, Ione—see ! the portico of the Temple of Fortune is before us. Let us creep beneath it ; it will protect us from the showers.”

He caught his beloved in his arms, and with difficulty and labour gained the temple. He bore her to the remoter and more sheltered part of the portico, and leaned over her, that he might shield her, with his own form, from the lightning and the showers ! The beauty and the unselfishness of love could hallow even that dismal time !

“Who is there ?” said the trembling and hollow voice of one who had preceded them in their place of refuge. “Yet, what matters ?—the crush of the ruined world forbids to us friends or foes.”

Ione turned at the sound of the voice, and, with a faint shriek, cowered again beneath the arms of Glaucus : and he, looking in the direction of the voice, beheld the cause of her alarm. Through the darkness glared forth two burning eyes—the lightning flashed and lingered athwart the temple—and Glaucus, with a shudder, perceived the lion to which he had been doomed couched beneath the pillars ;—and, close beside it, unwitting of

the vicinity, lay the giant form of him who had accosted them—the wounded gladiator, Niger.

That lightning had revealed to each other the form of beast and man; yet the instinct of both was quelled. Nay, the lion crept near and nearer to the gladiator, as for companionship; and the gladiator did not recede or tremble. The revolution of Nature had dissolved her lighter terrors as well as her wonted ties.

While they were thus terribly protected, a group of men and women, bearing torches, passed by the temple. They were of the congregation of the Nazarenes; and a sublime and unearthly emotion had not, indeed, quelled their awe, but it had robbed awe of fear. They had long believed, according to the error of the early Christians, that the Last Day was at hand; they imagined now that the Day had come.

“Woe! woe!” cried, in a shrill and piercing voice, the elder at their head. “Behold! the Lord descendeth to judgment! He maketh fire come down from heaven in the sight of men! Woe! woe! ye strong and mighty! Woe to ye of the fasces and the purple! Woe to the idolater and the worshipper of the beast! Woe to ye who pour forth the blood of saints, and gloat over the death-pangs of the sons of God! Woe to the harlot of the sea!—woe! woe!”

And with a loud and deep chorus, the troop chanted forth along the wild horrors of the air,—“Woe to the harlot of the sea!—woe! woe!”

The Nazarenes paced slowly on, their torches still flickering in the storm, their voices still raised in menace

and solemn warning, till, lost amid the windings in the streets, the darkness of the atmosphere and the silence of death again fell over the scene.

There was one of the frequent pauses in the showers, and Glaucus encouraged Ione once more to proceed. Just as they stood, hesitating, on the last step of the portico, an old man, with a bag in his right hand and leaning upon a youth, tottered by. The youth bore a torch. Glaucus recognised the two as father and son—miser and prodigal.

“Father,” said the youth, “if you cannot move more swiftly, I must leave you, or we *both* perish!”

“Fly, boy, then, and leave thy sire!”

“But I cannot fly to starve; give me thy bag of gold!” And the youth snatched at it.

“Wretch! Wouldst thou rob thy father?”

“Ay! who can tell the tale in this hour? Miser, perish!”

The boy struck the old man to the ground, plucked the bag from his relaxing hand, and fled onward with a shrill yell.

“Ye gods!” cried Glaucus: “are ye blind, then, even in the dark? Such crimes may well confound the guiltless with the guilty in one common ruin. Ione, on!—on!”

CHAPTER VIII.

Arbaces Encounters Glaucus and Ione.

ADVANCING, as men grope for escape in a dungeon, Ione and her lover continued their uncertain way. At the moments when the volcanic lightnings lingered over the streets, they were enabled, by that awful light, to steer and guide their progress : yet, little did the view it presented to them cheer or encourage their path. In parts, where the ashes lay dry and uncombined with the boiling torrents, cast upward from the mountain at capricious intervals, the surface of the earth presented a leprous and ghastly white. In other places, cinder and rock lay matted in heaps, from beneath which emerged the half-hid limbs of some crushed and mangled fugitive. The groans of the dying were broken by wild shrieks of women's terror—now near, now distant—which, when heard in the utter darkness, were rendered doubly appalling by the crushing sense of helplessness and the uncertainty of the perils around ; and clear and distinct through all were the mighty and various noises from the Fatal Mountain ; its rushing winds ; its whirling torrents ; and, from time to time, the burst and roar of some more fiery and fierce explo-

sion. And ever as the winds swept howling along the street, they bore sharp streams of burning dust, and such sickening and poisonous vapours, as took away, for the instant, breath and consciousness, followed by a rapid revulsion of the arrested blood, and a tingling sensation of agony trembling through every nerve and fibre of the frame.

“Oh, Glaucus ! my beloved ! my own !—take me to thy arms ! One embrace ! let me feel thy arms around me—and in that embrace let me die—I can no more !”

“For my sake, for my life—courage, yet, sweet Ione—my life is linked with thine : and see—torches—this way ! Lo ! how they brave the wind ! Ha ! they live through the storm—doubtless, fugitives to the sea !—we will join them.”

As if to aid and reanimate the lovers, the winds and showers came to a sudden pause ; the atmosphere was profoundly still—the mountain seemed at rest, gathering, perhaps, fresh fury for its next burst : the torch-bearers moved quickly on. “We are nearing the sea,” said, in a calm voice, the person at their head. “Liberty and wealth to each slave who survives this day. Courage !—I tell you that the gods themselves have assured me of deliverance—On !”

Redly and steadily the torches flashed full on the eyes of Glaucus and Ione, who lay trembling and exhausted on his bosom. Several slaves were bearing, by the light, panniers and coffers, heavily laden ; in front of them,—a drawn sword in his hand,—towered the lofty form of Arbaces.

“By my fathers!” cried the Egyptian, “Fate smiles upon me even through these horrors, and, amidst the dreaddest aspects of woe and death, bodes me happiness and love. Away, Greek! I claim my ward, Ione!”

“Traitor and murderer!” cried Glaucus, glaring upon his foe, “Nemesis hath guided thee to my revenge!—a just sacrifice to the shades of Hades, that now seem loosed on earth. Approach—touch but the hand of Ione, and thy weapon shall be as a reed—I will tear thee limb from limb!”

Suddenly, as he spoke, the place became lighted with an intense and lurid glow. Bright and gigantic through the darkness, which closed around it like the walls of hell, the mountain shone—a pile of fire! Its summit seemed riven in two; or rather, above its surface there seemed to rise two monster shapes, each confronting each, as Demons contending for a World. These were of one deep blood-red hue of fire, which lighted up the whole atmosphere far and wide; but *below*, the nether part of the mountain was still dark and shrouded, save in three places, adown which flowed, serpentine and irregular, rivers of the molten lava.* Darkly red through the profound gloom of their banks, they flowed slowly on, as towards the devoted city. Over the broadest there seemed to spring a cragged and stupendous arch, from which, as from the jaws of hell, gushed the sources of the sudden Phlegethon. And through the stilled air was heard the rattling of the fragments of rock, hurling one upon another as they were borne

* See note (a) at the end.

down the fiery cataracts—darkening, for one instant, the spot where they fell, and suffused the next in the burnished hues of the flood along which they floated !

The slaves shrieked aloud, and, cowering, hid their faces. The Egyptian himself stood transfixed to the spot, the glow lighting up his commanding features and jewelled robes. High behind him rose a tall column that supported the bronze statue of Augustus ; and the imperial image seemed changed to a shape of fire !

With his left hand circled round the form of Ione—with his right arm raised in menace, and grasping the stilus which was to have been his weapon in the arena, and which he still fortunately bore about him, with his brow knit, his lips apart, the wrath and menace of human passions arrested as by a charm, upon his features, Glaucus fronted the Egyptian !

Arbaces turned his eyes from the mountain—they rested on the form of Glaucus ! He paused a moment : “Why,” he muttered, “should I hesitate ? Did not the stars foretell the only crisis of imminent peril to which I was subjected ?—Is not that peril past ?”

“The soul,” cried he aloud, “can brave the wreck of worlds and the wrath of imaginary gods ! By that soul will I conquer to the last ! Advance, slaves !—Athenian, resist me, and thy blood be on thine own head ! Thus, then, I regain Ione !”

He advanced one step—it was his last on earth ! The ground shook beneath him with a convulsion that cast all around upon its surface. A simultaneous crash

resounded through the city, as down toppled many a roof and pillar!—the lightning, as if caught by the metal, lingered an instant on the Imperial Statue—then shivered bronze and column! Down fell the ruin, echoing along the street, and riving the solid pavement where it crashed!—The prophecy of the stars was fulfilled!

The sound—the shock, stunned the Athenian for several moments. When he recovered, the light still illumined the scene—the earth still slid and trembled beneath! Ione lay senseless on the ground; but he saw her not yet—his eyes were fixed upon a ghastly face that seemed to emerge, without limbs or trunk, from the huge fragments of the shattered column—a face of unutterable pain, agony, and despair! The eyes shut and opened rapidly, as if sense were not yet fled; the lips quivered and grinned—then sudden stillness and darkness fell over the features, yet retaining that aspect of horror never to be forgotten!

So perished the wise Magician—the great Arbaces—the Hermes of the Burning Belt—the last of the royalty of Egypt!

CHAPTER IX.

The Despair of the Lovers—The Condition of the Multitude.

GLAUCUS turned in gratitude but in awe, caught Ione once more in his arms, and fled along the street, that was yet intensely luminous. But suddenly a duller shade fell over the air. Instinctively he turned to the mountain, and behold! one of the two gigantic crests, into which the summit had been divided, rocked and wavered to and fro; and then, with a sound, the mightiness of which no language can describe, it fell from its burning base, and rushed, an avalanche of fire, down the sides of the mountain! At the same instant gushed forth a volume of blackest smoke—rolling on, over air, sea, and earth.

Another—and another—and another shower of ashes, far more profuse than before, scattered fresh desolation along the streets. Darkness once more wrapped them as a veil; and Glaucus, his bold heart at last quelled and despairing, sank beneath the cover of an arch, and, clasping Ione to his heart—a bride on that couch of ruin—resigned himself to die.

Meanwhile Nydia, when separated by the throng from Glaucus and Ione, had in vain endeavoured to

regain them. In vain she raised that plaintive cry so peculiar to the blind; it was lost amidst a thousand shrieks of more selfish terror. Again and again she returned to the spot where they had been divided—to find her companions gone, to seize every fugitive—to inquire of Glaucus—to be dashed aside in the impatience of distraction. Who in that hour spared one thought to his neighbour? Perhaps in scenes of universal horror, nothing is more horrid than the unnatural selfishness they engender. At length it occurred to Nydia, that as it had been resolved to seek the sea-shore for escape, her most probable chance of rejoining her companions would be to persevere in that direction. Guiding her steps, then, by the staff which she always carried, she continued, with incredible dexterity, to avoid the masses of ruin that encumbered the path—to thread the streets—and unerringly (so blessed now was that accustomed darkness, so afflicting in ordinary life!) to take the nearest direction to the sea-side.

Poor girl! her courage was beautiful to behold!—and Fate seemed to favour one so helpless! The boiling torrents touched her not, save by the general rain which accompanied them; the huge fragments of scoria shivered the pavement before and beside her, but spared that frail form: and when the lesser ashes fell over her, she shook them away with a slight tremor,* and dauntlessly resumed her course.

* “A heavy shower of ashes rained upon us, which every now and then we were obliged to shake off, otherwise we should have been crushed and buried in the heap.”—*Pliny*.

Weak, exposed, yet fearless, supported but by one wish, she was a very emblem of Psyche in her wanderings ; of Hope, walking through the Valley of the Shadow ; the Soul itself—lone but undaunted, amidst the dangers and the snares of life !

Her path was, however, constantly impeded by the crowds that now groped amidst the gloom, now fled in the temporary glare of the lightnings across the scene ; and, at length, a group of torch-bearers rushing full against her, she was thrown down with some violence.

“What !” said the voice of one of the party, “is this the brave blind girl ? By Bacchus, she must not be left here to die ! Up ! my Thessalian ! So—so. Are you hurt ? That’s well ! Come along with us ! we are for the shore !”

“O Sallust ! it is thy voice ! The gods be thanked ! Glaucus ! Glaucus ! have ye seen him ?”

“Not I. He is doubtless out of the city by this time. The gods who saved him from the lion will save him from the burning mountain.”

As the kindly epicure thus encouraged Nydia, he drew her along with him towards the sea, heeding not her passionate entreaties that he would linger yet awhile to search for Glaucus ; and still, in the accent of despair, she continued to shriek out that beloved name, which, amidst all the roar of the convulsed elements, kept alive a music at her heart.

The sudden illumination, the bursts of the floods of lava, and the earthquake, which we have already described, chanced when Sallust and his party had just

gained the direct path leading from the city to the port ; and here they were arrested by an immense crowd, more than half the population of the city. They spread along the field without the walls, thousands upon thousands, uncertain whither to fly. The sea had retired far from the shore ; and they who had fled to it had been so terrified by the agitation and preternatural shrinking of the element, the gasping forms of the uncouth sea things which the waves had left upon the sand, and by the sound of the huge stones cast from the mountain into the deep, that they had returned again to the land, as presenting the less frightful aspect of the two. Thus the two streams of human beings, the one seaward, the other *from* the sea, had met together, feeling a sad comfort in numbers ; arrested in despair and doubt.

“The world is to be destroyed by fire,” said an old man in long loose robes, a philosopher of the Stoic school : “Stoic and Epicurean wisdom have alike agreed in this prediction ; and the hour is come !”

“Yea ; the hour is come !” cried a loud voice, solemn but not fearful.

Those around turned in dismay. The voice came from above them. It was the voice of Olinthus, who, surrounded by his Christian friends, stood upon an abrupt eminence on which the old Greek colonists had raised a temple to Apollo, now timeworn and half in ruin.

As he spoke, there came that sudden illumination which had heralded the death of Arbaces, and glowing over that mighty multitude, awed, crouching, breath-

less—never on earth had the faces of men seemed so haggard!—never had meeting of mortal beings been so stamped with the horror and sublimity of dread!—never till the last trumpet sounds, shall such meeting be seen again! And above those the form of Olinthus, with outstretched arm and prophet brow, girt with the living fires. And the crowd knew the face of him they had doomed to the fangs of the beast—*then* their victim—*now* their warner; and through the stillness again came his ominous voice—

“The hour is come!”

The Christians repeated the cry. It was caught up—it was echoed from side to side—woman and man, childhood and old age repeated, not aloud, but in a smothered and dreary murmur—

“THE HOUR IS COME!”

At that moment, a wild yell burst through the air;—and, thinking only of escape, whither it knew not, the terrible tiger of the desert leaped amongst the throng and hurried through its parted streams. And so came the earthquake,—and so darkness once more fell over the earth!

And now new fugitives arrived. Grasping the treasures no longer destined for their lord, the slaves of Arbaces joined the throng. One only of all their torches yet flickered on. It was borne by Sosia; and its light falling on the face of Nydia, he recognised the Thessalian.

“What avails thy liberty now, blind girl?” said the slave.

"Who art thou? canst thou tell me of Glaucus?"

"Ay; I saw him but a few minutes since."

"Blessed be thy head! where?"

"Couched beneath the arch of the forum—dead or dying!—gone to rejoin Arbaces, who is no more!"

Nydia uttered not a word, she slid from the side of Sallust; silently she glided through those behind her, and retraced her steps to the city. She gained the forum—the arch; she stooped down—she felt around—she called on the name of Glaucus.

A weak voice answered—"Who calls on me? Is it the voice of the Shades? Lo! I am prepared!"

"Arise! follow me! Take my hand! Glaucus, thou shalt be saved!"

In wonder and sudden hope, Glaucus arose—"Nydia still? Ah! thou, then, art safe!"

The tender joy of his voice pierced the heart of the poor Thessalian, and she blessed him for his thought of her.

Half leading, half carrying Ione, Glaucus followed his guide. With admirable discretion, she avoided the path which led to the crowd she had just quitted, and, by another route, sought the shore.

After many pauses and incredible perseverance, they gained the sea, and joined a group, who, bolder than the rest, resolved to hazard any peril rather than continue in such a scene. In darkness they put forth to sea; but, as they cleared the land and caught new aspects of the mountain, its channels of molten fire threw a partial redness over the waves.

Utterly exhausted and worn out, Ione slept on the breast of Glaucus, and Nydia lay at his feet. Meanwhile the showers of dust and ashes, still borne aloft, fell into the wave, and scattered their snows over the deck. Far and wide, borne by the winds, those showers descended upon the remotest climes, startling even the swarthy African ; and whirled along the antique soil of Syria and of Egypt.*

* Dion Cassius.

CHAPTER X.

The Next Morning.—The Fate of Nydia.

AND meekly, softly, beautifully, dawned at last the light over the trembling deep!—the winds were sinking into rest—the foam died from the glowing azure of that delicious sea. Around the east, thin mists caught gradually the rosy hues that heralded the morning; Light was about to resume her reign. Yet, still, dark and massive in the distance, lay the broken fragments of the destroying cloud, from which red streaks, burning dimlier and more dim, betrayed the yet rolling fires of the mountain of the “Scorched Fields.” The white walls and gleaming columns that had adorned the lovely coasts were no more. Sullen and dull were the shores so lately crested by the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii. The darlings of the Deep were snatched from her embrace! Century after century shall the mighty Mother stretch forth her azure arms, and know them not—moaning round the sepulchres of the Lost!

There was no *shout* from the mariners at the dawning light—it had come too gradually, and they were too

wearied for such sudden bursts of joy—but there was a low, deep *murmur* of thankfulness amidst those watchers of the long night. They looked at each other and smiled—they took heart—they felt once more that there was a world around, and a God above them! And in the feeling that the worst was passed, the over-wearied ones turned round, and fell placidly to sleep. In the growing light of the skies there came the silence which night had wanted: and the bark drifted calmly onward to its port. A few other vessels, bearing similar fugitives, might be seen in the expanse, apparently motionless, yet gliding also on. There was a sense of security, or companionship, and of hope, in the sight of their slender masts and white sails. What beloved friends, lost and missed in the gloom, might they not bear to safety and to shelter!

In the silence of the general sleep, Nydia rose gently. She bent over the face of Glaucus—she inhaled the deep breath of his heavy slumber—timidly and sadly she kissed his brow—his lips; she felt for his hand, it was locked in that of Ione; she sighed deeply, and her face darkened. Again she kissed his brow, and with her hair wiped from it the damps of night. “May the gods bless you, Athenian!” she murmured: “may you be happy with your beloved one!—may you sometimes remember Nydia! Alas! she is of no further use on earth!”

With these words she turned away. Slowly she crept along by the *fori*, or platforms, to the farther

side of the vessel, and, pausing, bent low over the deep; the cool spray dashed upward on her feverish brow. "It is the kiss of death," she said—"it is welcome." The balmy air played through her waving tresses—she put them from her face, and raised those eyes—so tender, though so lightless—to the sky, whose soft face she had never seen!

"No, no!" she said, half aloud, and in a musing and thoughtful tone, "I cannot endure it: this jealous, exacting love—it shatters my whole soul in madness! I might harm him again—wretch that I was! I have saved him—twice saved him—happy, happy thought:—why not *die* happy?—it is the last glad thought I can ever know. Oh! sacred Sea! I hear thy voice invitingly—it hath a freshening and joyous call. They say that in thy embrace is dishonour—that thy victims cross not the fatal Styx—be it so! I would not meet him in the Shades, for I should meet him still with *her*! Rest—rest—rest!—there is no other Elysium for a heart like mine!"

A sailor, half dozing on the deck, heard a slight splash on the waters. Drowsily he looked up, and behind, as the vessel merrily bounded on, he fancied he saw something white above the waves; but it vanished in an instant. He turned round again, and dreamed of his home and children.

When the lovers awoke, their first thought was of each other—their next of Nydia! She was not to be found—none had seen her since the night. Every

crevice of the vessel was searched—there was no trace of her. Mysterious from first to last, the blind Thesalian had vanished for ever from the living world ! They guessed her fate in silence : and Glaucus and Ione, while they drew nearer to each other (feeling each other the world itself) forgot their deliverance, and wept as for a departed sister.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

Wherein all things cease.

LETTER FROM GLAUCUS TO SALLUST, TEN YEARS
AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF POMPEII.

Athens.

“GLAUCUS to his beloved Sallust—greeting and health !
—You request me to visit you at Rome—no, Sallust,
come rather to me at Athens ! I have forsworn the
Imperial City, its mighty tumult and hollow joys.
In my own land henceforth I dwell for ever. The
ghost of our departed greatness is dearer to me than
the gaudy life of your loud prosperity. There is a
charm to me which no other spot can supply, in the
porticos hallowed still by holy and venerable shades.
In the olive-groves of Ilyssus I still hear the voice of
poetry—on the heights of Phyle, the clouds of twi-
light seem yet the shrouds of departed freedom—the
heralds—the heralds—of the morrow that shall come !
You smile at my enthusiasm, Sallust !—better be
hopeful in chains than resigned to their glitter. You
tell me you are sure that I cannot enjoy life in these
melancholy haunts of a fallen majesty. You dwell

with rapture on the Roman splendours, and the luxuries of the imperial court. My Sallust—‘*non sum qualis eram*’—I am not what I was! The events of my life have sobered the bounding blood of my youth. My health has never quite recovered its wonted elasticity ere it felt the pangs of disease, and languished in the damps of a criminal’s dungeon. My mind has never shaken off the dark shadow of the Last Day of Pompeii—the horror and the desolation of that awful ruin!—Our beloved, our remembered Nydia! I have reared a tomb to her shade, and I see it every day from the window of my study. It keeps alive in me a tender recollection—a not unpleasing sadness—which are but a fitting homage to her fidelity, and the mysteriousness of her early death. Ione gathers the flowers, but my own hand wreathes them daily around the tomb. She was worthy of a tomb in Athens!

“You speak of the growing sect of the Christians in Rome. Sallust, to you I may confide my secret; I have pondered much over that faith—I have adopted it. After the destruction of Pompeii, I met once more with Olinthus—saved, alas! only for a day, and falling afterwards a martyr to the indomitable energy of his zeal. In my preservation from the lion and the earthquake he taught me to behold the hand of the unknown God! I listened—believed—adored! My own, my more than ever beloved Ione, has also embraced the creed!—a creed, Sallust, which, shedding light over this world, gathers its concentrated glory,

like a sunset, over the next ! We know that we are united in the soul, as in the flesh, for ever and for ever ! Ages may roll on, our very dust be dissolved, the earth shrivelled like a scroll ; but round and round the circle of eternity rolls the wheel of life—imperishable—unceasing ! And as the earth from the sun, so immortality drinks happiness from virtue, which is the smile upon the face of God ! Visit me, then, Sallust ; bring with you the learned scrolls of Epicurus, Pythagoras, Diogenes ; arm yourself for defeat ; and let us, amidst the groves of Academus, dispute, under a surer guide than any granted to our fathers, on the mighty problem of the true ends of life and the nature of the soul.

“ Ione—at that name my heart yet beats !—Ione is by my side as I write : I lift my eyes and meet her smile. The sunlight quivers over Hymettus : and along my garden I hear the hum of the summer bees. Am I happy, ask you ? Oh, what can Rome give me equal to what I possess at Athens ? Here, everything awakens the soul and inspires the affections—the trees, the waters, the hills, the skies, are those of Athens !—fair, though mourning—mother of the Poetry and the Wisdom of the World. In my hall I see the marble faces of my ancestors. In the Ceramicus, I survey their tombs ! In the streets, I behold the hand of Phidias and the soul of Pericles. Harmodius, Aristogiton—*they* are everywhere—but in our hearts !—in *mine*, at least, they shall not perish ! If anything can make me forget that I am an Athenian and not free,

it is partly the soothing—the love—watchful, vivid, sleepless—of Ione :—a love that has taken a new sentiment in our new creed*—a love which none of our poets, beautiful though they be, had shadowed forth in description ; for mingled with religion, it partakes of religion ; it is blended with pure and unworldly thoughts ; it is that which we may hope to carry through eternity, and keep, therefore, white and unsullied, that we may not blush to confess it to our God ! This is the true type of the dark fable of our Grecian Eros and Psyche—it is, in truth, the soul asleep in the arms of love. And if this, our love, support me partly against the fever of the desire for freedom, my religion supports me more ; for whenever I would grasp the sword and sound the shell, and rush to a new Marathon (but Marathon without victory), I feel my despair at the chilling thought of my country's impotence—the crushing weight of the Roman yoke, comforted, at least, by the thought that earth is but the beginning of life—that the glory of a few years matters little in the vast space of eternity—that there is no perfect freedom till the chains of clay fall from the soul, and all space, all time, become its heritage and domain. Yet, Sallust, some mixture of the soft Greek blood still mingles with my faith. I can share not the zeal of those who see crime and eternal wrath in men who cannot believe as they. I shudder not at the creed of others. I dare not *curse* them—I pray the Great Father to *convert*. This lukewarmness

* See note (b) at the end.

exposes me to some suspicion amongst the Christians : but I forgive it : and, not offending openly the prejudices of the crowd, I am thus enabled to protect my brethren from the danger of the law, and the consequences of their own zeal. If moderation seem to me the natural creature of benevolence, it gives, also, the greatest scope to beneficence.

“Such, then, O Sallust ! is my life—such my opinions. In this manner I greet existence and await death. And thou, glad-hearted and kindly pupil of Epicurus, thou——But come hither, and see what enjoyments, what hopes are ours—and not the splendour of imperial banquets, nor the shouts of the crowded circus, nor the noisy forum, nor the glittering theatre, nor the luxuriant gardens, nor the voluptuous baths of Rome,—shall seem to thee to constitute a life of more vivid and uninterrupted happiness than that which thou so unreasonably pitiest as the career of Glaucus the Athenian !—Farewell !”

Nearly Seventeen Centuries had rolled away when the City of Pompeii was disinterred from its silent tomb,* all vivid with undimmed hues ; its walls fresh as if painted yesterday,—not a hue faded on the rich mosaic of its floors,—in its forum the half-finished

* Destroyed A.D. 79 ; first discovered A.D. 1750.

columns as left by the workman's hand,—in its gardens the sacrificial tripod,—in its halls the chest of treasure,—in its baths the strigil,—in its theatres the counter of admission,—in its saloons the furniture and the lamp,—in its triclinia the fragments of the last feast,—in its cubicula the perfumes and the rouge of faded beauty,—and everywhere the bones and skeletons of those who once moved the springs of that minute yet gorgeous machine of luxury and of life !*

In the house of Diomed, in the subterranean vaults, twenty skeletons (one of a babe) were discovered in one spot by the door, covered by a fine ashen dust, that had evidently been wafted slowly through the apertures, until it had filled the whole space. There were jewels and coins, candelabra for unavailing light, and wine hardened in the amphoræ for a prolongation of agonised life. The sand, consolidated by damp, had taken the forms of the skeletons as in a cast ; and the traveller may yet see the impression of a female neck and bosom of young and round proportions—the trace of the fated Julia ! It seems to the inquirer as if the air had been gradually changed into a sulphurous vapour ; the inmates of the vaults had rushed to the door, to find it closed and blocked up by the scoria without, and in their attempts to force it, had been suffocated with the atmosphere.

In the garden was found a skeleton with a key by its bony hand, and near it a bag of coins. This

* See note (c) at the end.

is believed to have been the master of the house—the unfortunate Diomed, who had probably sought to escape by the garden, and been destroyed either by the vapours or some fragment of stone. Beside some silver vases lay another skeleton, probably of a slave.

The houses of Sallust and of Pansa, the Temple of Isis, with the juggling concealments behind the statues—the lurking-place of its holy oracles—are now bared to the gaze of the curious. In one of the chambers of that temple was found a huge skeleton with an axe beside it: two walls had been pierced by the axe—the victim could penetrate no farther. In the midst of the city was found another skeleton, by the side of which was a heap of coins, and many of the mystic ornaments of the fane of Isis. Death had fallen upon him in his avarice, and Calenus perished simultaneously with Burbo! As the excavators cleared on through the mass of ruin, they found the skeleton of a man literally severed in two by a prostrate column; the skull was of so striking a conformation, so boldly marked in its intellectual as well as its worse physical developments, that it has excited the constant speculation of every itinerant believer in the theories of Spurzheim who has gazed upon that ruined palace of the mind. Still, after the lapse of ages, the traveller may survey that airy hall within whose cunning galleries and elaborate chambers once thought, reasoned, dreamed, and sinned, the soul of Arbaces the Egyptian.

Viewing the various witnesses of a social system which has passed from the world for ever—a stranger, from that remote and barbarian Isle which the imperial Roman shivered when he named, paused amidst the delights of the soft Campania and composed this history !

NOTES.

NOTE TO BOOK IV.

(*α*) p. 224.

“We care not for gods up above us,—

We know there's no god for this earth, boys !”

The doctrines of Epicurus himself are pure and simple. Far from denying the existence of diviner powers, Velleius (the defender and explainer of his philosophy in Cicero's dialogue on the nature of the gods) asserts “that Epicurus was the first who saw that there were gods, from the impression which Nature herself makes on the minds of all men.” He imagined the belief of the Deity to be an innate or antecedent notion (*πρόληψις*) of the mind—a doctrine of which modern metaphysicians (certainly not Epicureans) have largely availed themselves ! He believed that worship was due to the divine powers from the veneration which felicity and excellence command, and not from any dread of their vengeance, or awe of their power : a sublime and fearless philosophy, suitable perhaps to half-a-dozen great and refined spirits, but which would present no check to the passions of the mass of mankind. According to him, the gods were far too agreeably employed, in contemplating their own happiness, to trouble their heads about the sorrows and the joys, the quarrels and the cares, the petty and transitory affairs, of man. For this earth they were unsympathising abstractions :—

“Wrapt up in majesty divine,

Can they regard on what we dine ?”

Cotta, who, in the dialogue referred to, attacks the philosophy of Epicurus with great pleasantry, and considerable, though not uniform, success, draws the evident and practical corollary from

the theory that asserts the non-interference of the gods. "How," says he, "can there be sanctity, if the gods regard not human affairs?—if the Deity show no benevolence to man, let us dismiss him at once. Why should I entreat him to be propitious? He cannot be propitious,—since, according to you, favour and benevolence are only the effects of imbecility." Cotta, indeed, quotes from Posidonius (*De Naturâ Deorum*), to prove that Epicurus did not really believe in the existence of a God; but that his concession of a being wholly nugatory was merely a precaution against accusations of atheism. "Epicurus could not be such a fool," says Cotta, "as sincerely to believe that a Deity has the members of a man without the power to use them; *a thin pellucidity*, regarding no one and doing nothing." And whether this be true or false concerning Epicurus, it is certain that, to all effects and purposes, his later disciples were but refining atheists. The sentiments uttered in the song in the text are precisely those professed in sober prose by the graceful philosophers of the Garden, who, as they had wholly perverted the morals of Epicurus, which are at once pure and practical, found it a much easier task to corrupt his metaphysics, which are equally dangerous and visionary.

NOTES TO BOOK V.

(a) p. 302.—"Rivers of the molten lava."

Various theories as to the exact mode by which Pompeii was destroyed have been invented by the ingenious; I have adopted that which is the most generally received, and which, upon inspecting the strata, appears the only one admissible by common-sense; namely, a destruction by showers of ashes, and boiling water, mingled with frequent irruptions of large stones, and aided by partial convulsions of the earth. Herculaneum, on the contrary, appears to have received not only the showers of ashes, but also inundations from molten lava; and the streams referred to in the text must be considered as destined for that city rather than for Pompeii. The volcanic lightnings introduced in my description were evidently among the engines of ruin at Pompeii. Papyrus, and other of the more inflammable materials, are found in a burnt state. Some substances in metal are partially melted; and a bronze statue is completely shivered, as by lightning. Upon the

whole (excepting only the inevitable poetic licence of shortening the time which the destruction occupied), I believe my description of that awful event is very little assisted by invention, and will be found not the less accurate for its appearance in a Romance.

(b) p. 319.—“A love that has taken a new sentiment in our new creed.”

What we now term, and feel to be, *sentiment* in love, was very little known amongst the ancients, and at this day is scarcely acknowledged out of Christendom. It is a feeling intimately connected with—not a belief, but a *conviction*, that the passion is of the soul, and, like the soul, immortal. Chateaubriand, in that work so full both of error and of truth, his essay on “The Genius of Christianity,” has referred to this sentiment with his usual eloquence. It makes, indeed, the great distinction between the amatory poetry of the moderns and that of the ancients. And I have thought that I might, with some consonance to truth and nature, attribute the consciousness of this sentiment to Glaucus after his conversion to Christianity, though he is only able vaguely to guess at, rather than thoroughly to explain, its cause.

(c) p. 321.—“And everywhere the bones and skeletons of those who once moved the springs of that minute yet gorgeous machine of luxury and of life !”

At present (1834) there have been about three hundred and fifty or four hundred skeletons discovered in Pompeii; but as a great part of the city is yet to be disinterred, we can scarcely calculate the number of those who perished in the destruction. Still, however, we have every reason to conclude that they were very few in proportion to those who escaped. The ashes had been evidently cleared away from many of the houses, no doubt for the purpose of recovering whatever treasure had been left behind. The mansion of our friend Sallust is one of those thus revisited. The skeletons which, reanimated for a while, the reader has seen play their brief parts upon the stage, under the names of Burbo, Calenus, Diomed, Julia, and Arbaces, were found exactly as described in the text:—may they have been reanimated more successfully for the pleasure of the reader than they have been for the solace of the author, who has vainly endeavoured, in the work which he now concludes, to beguile the most painful, gloomy, and despondent period of a life, in the web of which has been woven less of white than the world may deem! But like most other

friends, the Imagination is capricious, and forsakes us often at the moment in which we most need its aid. As we grow older, we begin to learn that, of the two, our more faithful and steadfast comforter is—Custom. But I should apologise for this sudden and unseasonable indulgence of a momentary weakness—it is *but* for a moment. With returning health returns also that energy without which the soul were given us in vain, and which enables us calmly to face the evils of our being, and resolutely to fulfil its objects. There is but one philosophy (though there are a thousand schools), and its name is Fortitude—

“TO BEAR IS TO CONQUER OUR FATE!”

END OF THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII.

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